

Stark InterGalactic

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/12465492) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/12465492>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Multi
Fandom:	The Avengers (Marvel Movies) , Thor (Movies) , Iron Man (Movies)
Relationship:	Loki/Tony Stark , Jane Foster/Thor , Frigga Freyja & Thor (Marvel) , James "Bucky" Barnes & Steve Rogers
Character:	Loki (Marvel) , Loki , Tony Stark , Thor (Marvel) , Jane Foster (Marvel) , Frigga (Marvel) , Odin (Marvel) , Steve Rogers , James "Bucky" Barnes
Additional Tags:	FrostIron - Freeform , Odin's A+ Parenting , Jotunn Frost Giant , Tony Stark Has A Heart , Tony Has Issues , Loki Has Issues , Genderbending , TRIGGER WARNINGS IN END NOTES , Lokitty , Forced Marriage
Series:	Part 3 of Queens Grace Continuum
Stats:	Published: 2017-10-23 Completed: 2018-03-08 Chapters: 24/24 Words: 85195

Stark InterGalactic

by [RenneMichaels](#)

Summary

After years of putting up with each other when Loki was a memory washed prisoner incarcerated in Stark Tower, Tony finds he misses the God of Mischief's snark, looks and intelligence... So, Tony hatched a plan to form a civil union with the Trickster. Odin, agreed, for a price. A big price. But while their relationship moved past the friendship stage... Cultural differences & a long distance relationship that only let them seeing each other once a month caused serious problems. Resulting in Loki, giving Tony an ultimatum to find a way to resolve their misunderstandings before they began to hate each other.

This was more-or-less written as a series of one-shots. A complete list of Chapter summaries are listed in Chapter 1.

24 - Epilogue - Things don't go as planned... but then, when did they ever. Final Chapter of the Queens Grace Continuum

Notes

Parts of this fic were written a long time ago, So it may seem a bit choppy. I have tried several times to give it a final polish, and smooth off some of the rough edges, but every time I did, I stalled again. Therefore... without further adieu, here it is, warts and all.

The first half of this fic was Beta'd by the wonderful Stella. The second half by Stella and EmuSam. And parts of it by Mima Mia... That is how long bits of this fic have been

roaming around. And then, after all their hard work I would of course see things that needed changed... Or added... So any mistakes are a my bad.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1 - Hangovers and Parleys Don't Mix

Chapter Summary

Thor visits Tony, no one is happy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Index of OneShots

1 - Hangovers and parleys don't mix - Thor visits Tony, no one is happy.

2 - Reflections - Putting the past behind you, Stark Negotiations meet Trickster Deals. Do not try this at home.

3 - Chatting with Sif - A little one on one with Siffy!

4 - House Hunters InterGalactic - Frigga solves a problem in a way that enchants Tony.... Originally, anyhow.

5 - You Set Me Up! - A nice Breeze, a pitcher of booze, and pleasant company could not make up for Tony having to go on an outing with the mother-in-law. But at least doesn't have to suffer alone.

6 - LoKitty! - This is the long awaited LoKitty One Shot... Seriously long awaited.... Like written in 2013.

7 - Live Long and Prosper... or not. - Tony discovers a way to insure his future comfort. And it doesn't involve Loki... or rather it does, but only as a go-between.

8 - Tony doesn't do personnel - Not all conflicts in Stark Haus are between Loki and Tony. Heck, some aren't even between Mortal and Æsir.

9 – Not yet, doesn't mean never - Self indulgent home decorating? Check. High Tech surveillance equipment? Check. Slippery, soapy, Trickers Gods? Oh Yeah.

10 - Being Helpful - Loki decides to be helpful. Well, eventually he did. And keep in mind this is Loki's version of that behavior. Your perception of helpful may vary.

11 - Mayhem Pondered - Some Asgardian tales of valor are a more than bit on the embroidered side. You can guess how well this goes over with Loki when they involve the Fatuous Four.

12 - Making Nice - Thor learns that the first part of solving a problem, is having someone pointing out to you that you have one.

13 - Loki is Impressed - Thor has to face how his relationships might affect his future rule.

14 - Boy Elroy does not fly Virgin Atlantic - Tony chats with an old business acquaintance.

15 - Lab - Loki stretches his creative talents... all of them. Some of them leave Tony unimpressed.

16- Jotunheim Minerals - It can be a little tense, visiting unknown relatives. But hey, gifts of all sorts are kinda nice.

17 – Avenging insults - Alcohol, and insults, are just not a good combination. Nor does it help that Tony is feeling just a bit feisty this evening.

18 - Swaying Reeds - Tony gets a chance to see his god in action. And then there is Odin....

19 - Fixing a problem -If you think trying to deal with inter-state issues are bad, try inter-realm ones. Thor is not the only one who can bring the hammer down.

20 - A Man out of Time in More Ways Than One - Tony gets a call trans-realm call for help. Kinda.

21 - Winter Friends are Friends Forever - What was lost, has now been found... Whether it wanted to be or not.

22 - Loki was in a state- Everybody Dance Now! And hide. And have meltdowns. Also Tony, Steve and Bucky hit Asgard's tourist traps.

23 - Get Out Of Jail Free Everyone has a price, some just are harder to accept than others.

24 - Epilogue Time skips and tie ups

OoooO

Chapter 1 - Hangovers and parleys don't mix

As the glare from the BiFrost returning Loki to Asgard faded, Tony's shaking legs refused to hold him upright for one more minute. Groaning, he folded down to the penthouse's hard stone floor in what was pretty much a controlled collapse.

"Tony!"

Waving away his CEO who was normally awesome, but right now frigidly annoyed at his stupidity, Tony hunched over in pain. What felt like, a team of tiny construction workers jackhammered into his brain, swallowing hard he fought down waves of nausea. Because hurling in front of a gorgeous woman was just so uncool, he shuffled his knees towards the just out of reach patio doors, and laboriously turned to lean the side of his face against the cool glass.

"Jarvis, keep an eye on him,"

That Pepper was exasperated with him was pretty much to be expected after all. As the sharp sound of her heels faded, Tony closed his eyes and reflected that it had been a long, long fourteen years since the Attack on New York. And while that had been a major fuck up, that to this day still gave him nightmares. In actuality, the fuck up Odin caused by imprisoning his not-son, stripped of magic, and godly strength, *without* making sure Asgard didn't have prisoner abuse problems, had actually caused Tony more grief.

Still, had Frigga not decided that Tony would make a better prison warden, he and Loki would never have become friends. Even if it was mostly an Asshole-Bestie-Relationship, with lots, and lots of unresolved sexual tension. The last because, Jailer/Prisoner, lets not go there reasons. Tension, which they did finally resolve thank god (but not Norse ones), after Loki had been removed from his care, and returned to Asgard. And, Tony will never regret their long distance marriage, no matter how hard it was for both of them. But he did bitterly regret last night's stunt. Removing Loki's magic as a joke, and then pulling some extremely dub-con shit, while being unexpectedly as high as a kite on the borrowed, or from Loki's view, temporarily stolen magic... That had been criminally stupid.

OoooO

The next afternoon, in addition to brooding on the cultural Egri Punji pit he had just fallen into with Loki, or to be more honest, had thrown himself into head first, Tony was still battling the Mother and Father of all hang-overs. Which was pretty unfair since he hadn't even drunk that much. Or *at all* really, at least not by his standards. The pounding in his head was so bad he was afraid to check his blood pressure, he ached all over, his mouth had that horrible copper tang that no amount of tooth brushing could get rid of, and every time he moved, he thought he was going to projectile vomit. And no, thanks to Frigga and her Asgardian servitor mark, he couldn't even blame the severity of his symptoms on his just getting old.

So, being Tony Stark, he did what he always did when upset; he went out, got drunk, and had mindless sex. Well, he did drink, mostly soda trying to calm his upset stomach. But in the first one at least there had been a splash of something else in it. And he did have a last ditch 'mindless sex gets rid of headaches' thought. In passing anyway, more out of old habits than anything else. But not even his inner masochist was up for guilt laden bouncing around with a complete stranger. Besides, as bad as his head felt right now, walking slowly was all he could do without wanting to decorate with upchuck. But, he did go out. It was his terrace, but it still counted as 'out' as far as he was concerned.

And that was how Thor found him. He was lying on a chaise lounge, in the shade of the terrace's party pavilion, clutching a drink in one hand and the pendant Loki had gifted him in the other. A small table to his right, held a bottle with a few extra-strength aspirins left in it, and a thankfully still empty emergency puke bucket. On his left sat a sterling chased champagne stand, complete with a two liter bottle of Ginger Ale surrounded by ice. Well, half of a two liter bottle anyway, or at least a quarter. Additionally, there was a chill pack on his forehead that wasn't helping him one damn bit.

"STARK!" The angry shout, and the sky above crashing and rumbling several times from the Thunder god's displeasure, felt like splinters of glass being driven into his brain. Tony couldn't help but cringe.

Once the noise died down, Tony swallowed hard and managed to get his nausea under control enough to speak. "Oh, good. You're here," he said in a faint thready voice. Not really moving any more than he had to, Tony tipped his head back a bit, looking out from under the ice pack that was partially covering his eyes. That Thor was pissed, was not really any kind of surprise. His anger

was apparent in his speech, the stormy scowl on his face, and the grumbling clouds gathering overhead. And of course the fact that it was to be expected, since however inadvertently, Tony had sent baby bro back home, with more than a few bruises. And not just the kind you get from overly enthusiastic happy times.

“Come on, Maxwell, do me a favor will you? Make with the hammer and put me out of my misery.”

But Thunder Britches, rat bastard that he was, didn't grant Tony a swift and merciful death. Instead Mjölnir cracked paving stones, as Thor sat her sharply down, as sort of an added exclamation point to his Bro-In-law unhappiness. However, something in Tony's voice or appearance caused the thunder god to lower his brows as much in thought, as in anger.

“How's Jane?” Tony asked distantly. Not that he really cared, but he was trying to be at least a little polite. If only in gratitude that her place at MIT, must have been where Thor had powered down to Earth at, rather than the landing pad on the other end of the roof. So yeah, Tony can at least act polite since he was pretty sure the noise and light from the Bi-Frost connecting to his roof would have killed him.

Not, that Thor didn't look like he wasn't going to do that eventually, Tony observed. He was almost looking forward to his impending demise, since it would at least mean the end to his guilt and misery. Not to mention this damn headache. And hey, he'd already dug his own grave. That would save them the effort, so that had to count in his favor at least a little bit, right?

“Jane is fine,” Thor growled darkly. “Loki, however, is not.”

“No?”

Tony was unable to decide if that new pain spike he'd just experienced was from his headache or the remembrance of Bambi's previous visit. “Please, tell me he went to see a healer first thing?”

Tony took the angry jerk of Thor's head as an affirmation that his god had received medical attention. He sighed, closing his eyes, relieved that at least Loki had been taken care of.

“As you know, there was a bit of a screw-up here the other night. I had no clue pulling his magic would make me as high as a kite. Or that I'd over stepped more than a few cultural as well as marital land mines. And then fall asleep before any after care was given. So I don't blame him one bit for trying to take me out the next morning. I mean, no sense trying to lie about that, right? And I won't blame you one bit if you smack me upside the head with MewMew over there.”

Tony re-opened a bleary eye to regard the incensed blond before him. “But when you're done? Do me a favor, will ya? Smack your damn father for not warning me about what would happen if I pulled Snape's magic, or telling me that it should only be done in a dire emergency.”

Reaching out with a hand that trembled only slightly less than it had yesterday, Tony took picked up his glass, and took a cautious drink. But apparently, it was not cautious enough. Hastily he set the glass on the side table. The ice bag slipped from his forehead, as he grabbed the silver ice bucket and held it under his chin. Swallowing hard, Tony grimaced, his raw throat reminding him of the hours he'd already spent throwing up. With every bit of will power he could muster, and several deep breaths, he managed to keep his still, roiling stomach from rising up to choke him.

But only just.

Regarding him with narrow blue eyes, Thor impatiently asked, “Tony? How much alcohol have

you drunk today?” The god turned the green plastic bottle so he could read its label, raising a brow in puzzlement when he determined that its contents were not alcoholic.

“Well, I feel like I guzzled a whole barrel of your damn Viking mead,” Tony said faintly as just the thought of that stuff made his stomach turn over, “but truthfully, buddy; the last drink I had was when your brother and I went out to dinner with Pepper the other night.” Tony shifted his grip on the bucket, so he could pluck up a crumpled serving towel that he’d stuffed beside him on the chaise. He used it to wipe the sweat dripping down his temples with a shaky hand.

“This,” he flapped the napkin vaguely towards himself, “this is a magic pulling hangover.” Breathing slowly through his mouth, Tony rolled his head bonelessly, so he could turn bloodshot eyes towards Thor. “Just between you and me? I don’t give a flying fuck if your brother decides he wants to turn everyone in the Nine Realms into chickens. I am never, ever, pulling his magic again.”

“You pulled Loki’s magic?” Thor frowned. “Why? What mischief was he up to?”

Seriously Thor?

Tony started to gift Thor with an epic eye roll, but stopped almost immediately. Diss’ing Thor wasn’t worth the pain his abortive movement caused to shoot across the front of his forehead.

As long as Thor had known Tony, he just automatically assumed it was his brother stirring the shit? And not Tony? Of course, it might be because he had known Loki so much longer. After all, a god of mischief and chaos had to have racked up a serious reputation for starting crap.

Just not this time.

“Actually, Lassie, I was the one up to mischief,” Tony made the feeblest ‘air quotes’ in history, because those are hard to do when you can’t move. “It was my turn to choose... stuff. And I did it as a damn stupid joke.”

Tony rolled a jaundiced eye towards the large blond, and concentrated on his breathing for a few minutes. Amazingly, Thor just stood there waiting patiently for him to continue. Granted, he still looked pissed, but at least he wasn’t yelling or anything. After a bit, Tony gently rested his head on the back of the chaise and continued. “Anyhow, his fucking mo-jo made me as high as a god damn kite when I pulled it, no inhibitions, a sucky time was had by all and then it gave me the worst hangover I’ve had since I was twenty when I gave it back.”

Tony huffed, “And trust me, it was up against some stiff competition, including the times I had to be rushed to the hospital to have my stomach pumped.”

Hey, he was rich, he was reckless, he drank excessively, and yes, in his younger, dumber years he had done more than his fair share of recreational drugs. Some pretty serious ones, even, that he was lucky to have survived... But try as he might, Tony could not remember any booze or drugs that had fucked him up as completely, and as sneakily as Loki’s magic.

In the years to come, Tony would always shudder at the remembrance of how hard he had crashed, and burned once he’d managed to figure out how to push Loki’s mojo back to him. He was glad of course, that his godling hadn’t gone back to Asgard totally defenseless without any of his powers. But he was sorry that he hadn’t known enough to be seated before doing so. The damn magic voodoo shit had no sooner left Tony’s body, than he’d felt like a marionette with its strings cut, dropping in a heap on the hard stone floor. Just one more reminder, that he really did need to install some thick plush carpeting over his marble floors. What with as many times as he seemed to have

face planted into them lately.

At any rate, Thor decided not to bash Tony's head in. Something Tony was sure he would have appreciated more, if he hadn't been half looking forward to death distracting him from his various regrets, aches and pains. Fatal blows aside, Tony had expected a lot more bellowing. But the Thunder god felt it would do no one any good to yell. Especially since Tony's condition meant he wouldn't be paying much attention to anything Thor said anyhow.

"It makes no sense to yell at you when you can barely hold your head up," the blond muttered, proving that he really had matured over the last decade. Instead, he refilled Tony's glass with ginger ale. And later at Jarvis' suggestion, he passed Tony a few saltine crackers to nibble on, in an attempt to get something in the engineer's stomach, that would stay down.

Who brought him to this Tony wondered. He was not arguing that he had done it himself of course. But, who was the instigator? Who fucking planted that god damn land mine of an idea in his head?

"Thunderbird, when you are done seeing Janie, I am going back up to Fairy Land with you." Tony's attempt at making this an authoritative statement, was stymied by his inability to point his index finger without it trembling. As well as the bits of cracker that had stuck to his dehydrated gums, crumbs of which, sprayed out every time he tried to speak. "I need to speak to All Daddy, sooner rather than later."

As soon as he would stand without falling back down, at the very latest. At any rate Tony was determined to have a showdown with the one eyed bastard of a Space Viking, ASAP.

Unfortunately, Thor had absolutely refused to take Tony back to Asgard with him. But before leaving to continue his flying visit to his *Lady Jane*, the Asgardian did agree to set up an appointment for Tony to see his Odin-ness as soon as he arrived on his next monthly visit. By which time, the All King would hopefully have decided not to incinerate his annoying Midgardian Son-In-Law.

OoooO

Over the next few weeks Tony consulted with Pepper on what paperwork to take with him, but he adamantly refused to allow her to accompany him this time. Odin was not, in Tony's opinion, a particularly forgiving god. And Tony didn't want Pepper caught in any in-law crossfire. As an added precaution, they had even sent the paper work to the All Father three weeks before his next visit. Mostly in the hopes that Odin would review it ahead of time, and send them notice of any changes he might want. Not that he had, mind you. But in addition to a heads up on any changes, Tony also wanted to give Odin time to spaz, and get over it before Tony actually got there. And if his proposal caused too much of a meltdown, something that was more than likely, there was the possibility that Thor or Loki could warn him of any inbound smiting heading his way. Okay, perhaps *Thor* would warn him. Because for all Tony knew, Loki might very well be tossing highly justified Dixie cups full of lighter fluid at Odin, hoping for a higher flame.

OoooO

Twenty eight days later, high above New York City, seventeen packing crates of various sizes were arranged on the intricate knot pattern delineating the Bi-Frost's landing zone. Standing beside them, impeccably dressed in a dark blue pinstriped suit with his sunglasses firmly in place, Tony looked up, calling out to the heavens.

"Yo' Heimdall! Beam me up!"

As usual, unlike when Thor accompanied him, he had to wait several minutes. And also as usual, it took until Tony's patience was about to snap, before a thunderous rumble accompanied by a searing bolt of light shot down Earthgard-way. Complete of course, with one freakishly tall, golden eyed, asshole God of Transportation. Who having took his own sweet time doing it, snatched Tony and his luggage up, and transported them to Space Viking land.

Unlike the first time he beamed aboard U.S.S. Assgard, Tony didn't stumble or get sick or anything. Hell, he's gone through the Wormhole Express enough times now, he merely took an extra half step to catch his balance, patted Heimdall's arm and then looked around for his ride. Since he'd made sure to put enough product in his hair that not even the Bi-Frost couldn't muss it, all Tony had to do was adjust the knot on his pale yellow tie, straighten his cuffs, and he was ready to take on the so-called, Protector of the Nine Realms, otherwise known as his *Not-Father-In-Law*.

Kvasir and Nerthus, two of Loki's guards, were of course waiting for Tony just outside the observatory. Nerthus immediately began directing the accompanying servants to start loading the crates onto a sky barge. From past experience, he knew that everything would be stacked in his palace apartment, long before he got done talking with Odin. Except, of course, the crate marked with the large gold Masonic Eye of Providence. That one, would be discretely delivered to Heimdall's house.

With a final check, to make sure there were no scuffs on his highly polished black dress shoes, Tony stepped up into the sky skiff. He made himself comfortable as Kvasir smoothly turned it around, heading for the Palace.

OoooO

Despite, this being the fourth time that Tony has waited to be ushered into Odin's inner sanctum, it still wasn't getting any easier. The One-eyed dude was down right scary, and he had a dungeon complete with potentially sadistic guards. So, how could anyone standing here not be terrified? Standing, of course, being an important part of that last thought. Because, of course, no one who came to the All Father's private lair was allowed to sit while waiting for him. At least not without Odin's express permission.

At least, Tony groused internally, when he was testifying before congress he was allowed to sit and be comfortable while he waited. Swaying slightly, he kept a discretely wary eye on the golden armored guys with the big honking swords flanking him. However, Tony didn't let the situation appear to rattle him. He was, after all, a smooth faced, smooth talking, inspired faker. A skill had been honed by the many times he'd had to face down irate Boards of Directors, livid congressional inquiries, and his own bastard father. So, if he wanted to put Tony off stride, Odin would have to really up his game. Cause this little bit of dominance theater? It was not going to do it.

OoooO

"Why?" Odin asked a short time later as he sat in his demi-throne. And it totally was a mini-me version of a throne, being much too resplendent to be just a chair. Unlike the much plainer one that Tony had finally been allowed to sit in.

Big and burly and of course poker faced, Odin gestured to his copy of Tony's new proposal. "I cannot help but notice that everything in this document has already been covered in our previous agreement. Can you give me a good reason why we are revisiting it?"

"And I can't help but point out that I can't get to know how Asgard works, and what is, and isn't important, with only being here one and a third days a month." Tony narrowed his eyes a moment, but then shrugged and made a face. "Well... Technically, only one and a third days every other

month. This means, of course, genius though I may be, I make tons of mistakes. And worse? Nine times out of ten, I have no flipping idea that what I'm doing is even a problem until it's already too late. And trust me, pissing off Reindeer Games is not the way to get him to agree to anything. Let alone settling down and playing nice like you want him to."

"Humf." Odin leaned back, no doubt easing various pressure points on his cos-play armor, and regarded Tony with a shrewd stare.

"And if I say no?" Odin's one brow raised in inquiry.

"Well... If you are trying to make sure Loki never has an anchor, you're certainly going about it the right way."

And no. Tony did not imagine the 'pot calling the kettle black' vibe Odin was pumping out. Even if the old dude did have a poker face that almost made Tony want to take him to Vegas someday. *Wouldn't that be quite the family outing?* It was so fraught with disaster that Tony was really, really tempted. Sort of. If only to get everyone's mind off his own recent screw-up.

Still...

"Okay, so maybe I messed up a couple of other times too, but that isn't the point right now. This time I messed up because I am clueless about Asgard. I messed up bad. And maybe this time I can fix it, but what about the next time? Or the time after that? Eventually, I am going to screw up so bad or so often he won't have anything to do with me. And you know what? I'm not okay with that. I can try harder on my personal screw ups, but I don't want to take the fall for not knowing what does and doesn't fly in O-Shining- Asgard."

"You will not be able to take care of your company if you spend so much time in Asgard. Nor your many other responsibilities."

Without conscious thought, Tony's head dropped down so his chin was resting on his chest. "With all due respect," he rolled his eyes up, once again looking at the King of Everything from underneath raised brows. "Why don't you let *me* worry about my company?"

Loki wasn't stupid. And he had warned Tony that he couldn't take much more drama. And truth be told, Tony was about hitting his own limit there. Hell, with the way they were forced to live now? Even with only seeing each other twelve times a year, he and Loki would be damn lucky if they lasted out the next decade before they imploded.

"This was not what we agreed to." Odin's voice was mild as he pushed the document an inch or two away from him, before he lacing his hands together over his armor clad belly, fixing his interested gaze on Tony, who he no doubt considered an upstart little mortal.

Dealing with Odin was more than nerve racking, but Tony felt a deep calm descend upon him. For the first time in two years, one way or another, within the next few hours even, he would have a pretty fair inkling of how this whole partner thing with Loki was going to play out.

Good.

It did not escape Tony's notice that Odin was studying him intently.

"You're right it wasn't." Tony's fingers tapped a complicated rhythm on his own set of documents, ending with a light double palm slap. "But I honestly wasn't aware of just how much I needed to learn about this place to keep from screwing up." He huffed ruefully, but still tossed a small self-effacing grin Odin's way. "Look, you want him engaged and staying out of trouble. I can do that.

But not, with only a handful of hours a month. We can't go on like this. Rather than keep screwing stuff up, and ending up hating each other, I'd rather just stick a boatload of cash in a trust for him up here, and do the same on Earthgard, and stop renewing my rune."

And that, amazingly enough, did get a reaction out of Odin. It was a small one, a bit of the kingly flaring nostril thing, but still.

Tony pushed on, "With my heart, and the way I press my luck, he'll be a rich widower in no time. And then, prisoner or not, he'll have a couple of nice trust administrators to take care of his monetary needs." Tony's smile widened. "And then how much of a problem will he be for you?"

Before Odin could even reply, still locking gazes with the elderly god, Tony slapped another sharp staccato on the table. Then he grinned, borrowing, of course, a little of Loki's patented crazy god look as he did so.

"Besides. Even if you agree, there is still a chance he won't. In which case, it's hasta la vista for me, and best wishes for Asgard's newest trust fund baby."

And that, Odin did not like at all.

The cranky one-eyed god scowled at Tony for several long minutes. "Perhaps," Odin husked with gritted teeth and a wintry little smile that never reached the light in his eye, "in return for a concession or two, we could change a few things."

Chapter End Notes

***** Trigger Warning - Brief mention of Dub-Con while impaired.

Chapter 2 – Reflections

Chapter Summary

Putting the past behind you, Stark Negotiations meet Trickster Deals. Do not try this at home.

Chapter Notes

Warnings in the endnote - Please read and heed.

I would say that this chapter pretty much marks the end of the introspective, gloomy shit. I am going for domestic, good times in Space Viking Land! And I am going to get there damn it. It is just these two have issues they need to deal with first.

Beta'd by the wonderful Stella and EmuSam. And then tinkered at by me. Sigh... So any mistakes are a my bad.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 2 – Reflections

Loki's work room was not large, or rather, not large compared to most of the living areas used by the royal family. But it was large enough to pace in, and provided space for a generous desk with flanking work tables on either side. The desk with the stone slab top was for his spell work, and the one on the opposite side of the room was for his computer. Wherever possible, Loki had left the shelving and bins that had originally stored his armor, equipment and weapons in place. Now they contained his construction records, material samples, and his slowly replenishing stock of seidr ingredients.

The high-backed black leather office chair he had stolen from the Tony's lab allowed him to glide effortlessly across the nearly seamless stone floor to get from desk to desk.

Since it was a Midgardian task chair, rather than Asgardian, it also allowed him to lean back. Relaxing while at a work station was not something your normal Æsir would have considered. Thus, here he was, his crossed ankles resting comfortably on one of the work tables while he played with the small arc reactor pendant Sta— Antho—Tony had given him. Caressing the pendent delicately, Loki pulled thin electric blue wisps from the glowing surface and allowed them to twine around his fingers so he could study them. Once he had discovered this was even possible, he had been quietly experimenting, and in fact had stealthily, over several days time, pulled energy from the Bi-Frost arc reactor into his pendent to help him create Darcy's guardian tote bag. However, as with that little experiment, which had taken place literally under Heimdall's nose, he was only able to snatch a bit of time here and there to explore various ways that the energy from Stark's reactors could be manipulated.

Lips quirking, almost against his will, Loki considered Stark being subtle in his use of power. Or rather, trying to be. He knew that Tony was far more likely to trust his technology, and blast his

way to a solution, than use indirect means. Still...

Loki carefully directed the glowing thread of energy, along with a bit of his own, back into the small disk. Using his seidr enhanced senses to scan the pendant, he sensed his own energy diffusing, almost as if color was the only difference between his seidr, and the energy originally produced by the small artifact.

It had been the arc reactor secured in Janis' server that had first allowed him to tentatively explore the possibilities of an externally replenishing power supply for his seidr. 'Tentatively' being the key word, since he could not risk damaging Janis by making too heavy a draw on the small arc reactor that ran her. He had, of course, checked to see if it could be removed for closer study. Not too surprisingly, he'd found the wretched thing was internally protected from tampering. Protected with lethal force even. Were it not, Loki would have been sorely tempted to ignore the risk to remove it for closer study.

The moment Loki had finished teaching his new AI, Janis, how to handle most of his mundane duties, he had made it his mission to learn as much as he could by studying her arc reactor. At least, externally. The hours Loki had spent sitting on the floor, with his fingers spread out on the huge CPU cube, had taught him enough to know that, while primitive, Tony's arc reactor had some very interesting properties, first and foremost being that it was one of the few non-seidr created power sources he knew of that could be used to augment, complement, and more amazingly, blend with natural seidr. Any power could be siphoned to throw an energy bolt, but to use it to create what you need, or power a complex spell...

Well, that was something you didn't find every day. Or at least, in all his long years of study, he seldom had.

And then Tony had made him the small reactor pendant to wear, which seemed to have the same properties on an even smaller scale. That made arc reactors, no matter what their size, something worth studying.

Holding the pendant at eye level, Loki twisted the chain it hung on, causing it to spin before him. One side glowing, the other side of course with that silly 'If lost, please return to Tony Stark' inscription. Like Loki didn't believe for a moment that there wasn't a powerful arc reactor powered tracking device embedded in it. Still...

Blue usable energy, where he belongs. Usable energy, he belongs. Usable, belongs.

The possibilities of both had haunted his dreams since first he'd discovered them.

"Well, I'm glad you like it."

Suppressing a start, Loki popped the pendant up into his fist, tucked it under his inner tunic, and using the end of the table for leverage, kicked away from it, turning his chair towards the voice.

Leaning against the frame of the somehow open door, his hands shoved in his jean pockets, Tony was watching him intently.

OoooO

Approaching Loki's suite, Tony wondered how it was that he had grown so emotionally needy. Smothering of course, the tiny voice telling him he'd been that way since he was five. But seriously?, he's a fucking hero! He's a genius, and a billionaire, and had people lining up for the chance to spend five minutes with him, let alone the rest of their lives. But despite that, all he could

think about right now was trying to figure out what it would take to turn his god up sweet.

Quietly, Tony stood in the doorway of the Loki's converted equipment room. He had wanted to get a good long look. If he and Loki couldn't make peace between them, this could be the last time he saw his god for a long while, or even forever.

After several long minutes, he spoke.

"I am sorry, Loki," Tony said quietly, pulling away from the door frame and deciding not to dance about the elephant in the room. And he was. Not only for the physical damage Loki had suffered trying to get loose from the handcuffs he'd left on when he'd passed out. But also for the mental damage he'd inflicted on the god when last they'd been together. That debacle hadn't been intentional, since the god had previously enjoyed, and indeed initiated similar activities, but Tony had totally missed the Asgardian prohibitions against not being the dominate partner in a same sex relationship. So things Loki had done to him, or enjoyed while he was in his female form, were pretty much verboten while Loki was male. Not that Loki might have really cared, since he totally didn't buy into Asgard's jacked up mindset on sex. But, Tony pulling his magic, had also disrupted the god's privacy from scrying spell. Something Tony hadn't considered at all. However, despite Tony, being as high a kite from his body not being used to magic or not, the upset, and distress to Loki had still been the same.

All because Tony hadn't known all the consequences that would result, from what he had originally considered, just a practical joke.

"But, you know I'm sorry, I've told you so a dozen times over the last month."

"Words, Tony," Loki said, his voice and expression both flat. "Empty. Useless. Meaningless. You apologize like a child caught sneaking cherry tarts from the kitchen larder. And had you only stole a pastry or two, your words alone might have sufficed for such an apology."

Tony couldn't help but grimace as he slouched into the room, trying not to feel like a dog who'd chewed a hole in the new sofa. And then piddled on it. "You're right. Words are nothing. But, one of the things I've always liked about you, Lo, is your entirely practical approach to forgiveness." He stopped a few feet away from where Loki was sitting, and pulling his right hand out of his pocket, he gestured a few times back and forth between Loki and himself. "That wergild thing you're so fond of. I think it's time we see about working a deal with that."

Something fleeting flashed in the god's eyes, causing a tiny hope to flare up in Tony's chest.

OoooO

Tipping his head back, Loki managed to look down his nose at Tony, despite being seated. "That depends on you. What restitution do you offer as the head of my house?" Tony's answer of course would tell him what he might expect to gain as redress for the injury and indignity that Tony had exposed him to. Time and experience had inured Loki towards the injustice inherent in everyday life. His current position as a quasi prisoner of Asgard, made any more meaningful attempts at personal retribution more costly for him than for Tony.

Not that he would even want that in this instance. When it was all said and done, he adored Tony. The man was attractive in a way that was purely Midgardian. He was not overly brawny like so many Ás males, nor was he delicately fey like the High Elves. He was muscular, but his short stature kept him from being overbearingly masculine. His lack of height however, did not stop him from puffing up like an overly aggressive Idavoll rooster. Still, aggressive or not, Tony admired learning as much as the Vanir, while being as doggedly stubborn as any Eldjötnar from

Muspelheim. All in all, everything Loki liked in one brilliant, if annoying little package.

And Yrim knows, there was nothing in the Nine Realms that Loki enjoyed more than pitting himself against a worthy opponent. That he was partnered with the man only meant that he had to be extremely subtle in the manner chosen to achieve his victory. And to be frank, that added dimension of complexity only made the battle more exciting. However, affection and lust aside, Loki was still determined to gain as much as he could while inflicting as harsh a lesson on his feckless partner as was possible... Without making the situation between them worse.

No sooner had these thoughts passed through his mind, when Tony exhibited some of the shrewd intelligence that constantly kept Loki on his toes.

Leaning against his work table, Tony rubbed a few knuckles on the underside of his goatee, while observing Loki thoughtful. "You know, Thor once mentioned how sometimes you did things only so people would bribe you to stop. So while it doesn't really change anything, 'cause no matter what you may, or may not have been setting up, I am the one who plucked the jewel out of the idol's hand..." Loki huffed and Tony's lips twitched in acknowledgment that Loki had hated those movies. "Anyhow, for my own curiosity, I have to ask... Was it a ruse?" Tony stopped playing with his goatee and waved his hand vaguely in the area of Loki's bi-natured crotch. "I mean this whole avoiding being the catcher while male... Thing."

Clever, clever Tony.

"Not entirely," Loki replied evenly, managing to keep hidden the amused satisfaction that Tony's question caused within him. As a rule, Loki's efforts at the long con were almost never noticed. So while it might make life more difficult in one way, it was still gratifying to go up against someone smart enough to catch onto what was happening. More so when that intelligent someone was already his.

Anthony shifted, lifting his chin in a slightly challenging manner, but otherwise masking whatever feeling he was experiencing, even if he couldn't entirely erase the note of censure in his voice. "By 'not entirely', you mean it's was partially, right? You were setting me up."

And just that fast his happiness drained away. Loki swiped a hand across his forehead, brushing back several strands of hair that suddenly annoyed him.

"The feelings of denial and self-loathing when the Jotun dual sex change was first imposed on my male Æsir form?..." Loki grimaced. "Those were very real. After I was forced to accept it?" His eyes lost focus for a moment as the memories of those months intruded, until he shoved them back down. Concentrated again on Tony, Loki gifted him with a small shrug and a tight lipped smile, the best he could manage at the moment. "Actually, I was trying to save that reveal for a time of great need... I admit I was counting on your insane curiosity to allow me to exchange that concession for either your assistance with some difficult task, or your forgiveness for some transgression you perceived as being particularly egregious."

"Huh." Pulling out a smaller chair, one that Loki had also liberated from the tower, Anthony dropped gracelessly down on it.

Various emotions, many of them pained, flitted across his mortal's face. Loki was almost heart sore that events had twisted their joining from that of lovers, into more of a negotiated business relationship. It really wasn't fair to Tony that he was caught up in this mess. The mortal hadn't asked for a broken god to be dropped on his doorstep. In a more perfect realm, of course, Loki wouldn't have to lay traps for his life's partner. He wouldn't have to scheme to gain the smallest measure of equality in their unequal joining. He wouldn't have to fear spending several centuries

beaten down by those who would take advantage of his weakened state. His lips thinned involuntarily, as thoughts flitted through his mind of what happened to the truly vulnerable once Asgard had driven them to their knees.

So, no matter how much Loki regretted, even inadvertently, setting that trap, and no matter how bad it might make him feel to see his mortal caught in it, there was also no way he could afford to give up the advantage that Tony's guilt was going to hand him.

Besides, Tony could have easily avoided the situation they now found themselves in, so there was onus on his part also.

Admittedly, as a fallen member of the royal house, and a state prisoner of the crown, Tony was the only thing currently protecting Loki from Asgard. However, if they were to have a real relationship, it needed to be more balanced. For his own sanity, Loki desperately needed to be Tony's equal. Otherwise their bond would become as poisoned as the ones he had with his false family.

Rolling his chair closer to the table by Loki's desk, Tony leaned forward recalling his attention to the conversation at hand. "Yeah. About that, didn't we already hash out the 'you don't have to pay for things' thing? 'Cause I'm pretty sure we got that one settled a while ago. And I really hope we don't have to revisit it..." He grimaced, showing far too many teeth. "Because honestly, it seems like every few months we have another metric ton of crap we need to settle. So honestly? Revisiting the same old? It's too much."

Sagging backwards, Tony blew out a long exasperated breath. "Fuck, Lo, just ask. As long as you don't want to take over a realm or anything, I'll help you as much as I can. If it pisses Odin, or Fury off, hell, I'm all in." He leaned forwards again, but this time he stretched out a hand and laid it on Loki's knee. "Look, I promise that I'll even start listening. Honestly listening, but please for the love of--" His voice took on a pleading tone, "Could you please, Lo, please just stop with the head games."

There was not a lot that Loki wouldn't give to be able to make such a promise. Oh, he could find a way to word such a promise that it would make Tony happy while still giving him room to maneuver at need. But such a betrayal would later cause many times more pain than an initial refusal to promise. He knows this for a fact, what with him having as many trust issues as Tony does.

"Unfortunately... That is a habit going back several centuries. What I consider strategy you might consider head games." Loki flashed him a semi-rueful look as his lips unwittingly curled into a sad, little smile. "I can try. But honestly?" Loki exhaled heavily, "it's such an ingrained habit, I don't think I am even always aware of it."

Tony appeared to greet this statement more with resignation than with anger. "Besides, you play the game better than your average Æsir, despite them having several centuries more experience."

Tony huffed dismissively, but was obviously flattered enough that he couldn't keep the corners of his own mouth from twitching up, before he shrugged his acceptance of those limitations.

"Try? That's a start anyway. Okay, shit we have to take care of. First things first and all that. Wergild for last month's issue." His gaze sharpened. "You tell me. What can I give you to make that go away? As long as it isn't illegal, won't get either of us into any more trouble that we already are, or get me shot by Pepper, Bruce or Odin, I will do my damndest to give it to you." He ran a hand through this overly stiff hair, disarraying it completely. "Material is better than intangible. Because, like you, habits are a bitch, and I have some pretty ingrained ones of my own, and as

you've mentioned in the past, promises to 'do better' can't be guaranteed."

It took every bit of control he could muster, but Loki was almost certain that he'd masked the absolute surge of elation that raced through him. In his wildest dreams he'd never thought that Stark would simply hand him an opportunity like this. Well, perhaps in his wildest dreams he had. But realistically? Loki had genuinely figured it might easily take years of cajolery, and manipulation for an opportunity of this magnitude to occur.

Almost breathless with excitement, plans and possibilities went swirling through Loki's mind, dozens of competing thoughts warring for his attention. In fact, it was only after several long moments that he could wrench himself back to the present.

"So?" Tony bumped him with his knee, seemingly unaware of the turmoil Loki was concealing. It was only centuries of discipline that allowed his voice to stay steady.

"Oh yes." Loki allowed the corners of his lips to twitch into a tight little smile. "I would accept this offer of recompense as payment for the events of last month."

The mildly worried look that taken hold of Stark during the time it had taken Loki to master himself, dissolved. In its place, his expression brightened. But before Anthony could say anything, Loki checked him by raising a finger in admonishment. "Provided, your offer is governed by the same privacy as our last agreement."

Stark's brows furrowed slightly, before morphing into something resembling fond exasperation. He barely managed to stop an eye roll.

"Secret? Again?"

"Yes. I will even allow Jarvis to assist me again. Provided, you will give him an unchangeable order to keep my personal business private even from you. In return, I promise that he will assist me with nothing that is illegal, involves the conquest of any realm--" Loki broke off, grinning slyly. He enjoyed bringing up a topic that had never ceased to amuse Pepper, "Or, that exceeds twelve percent of your ready funds."

Anthony's eyes popped at that one, which was honestly more amusing than Loki had thought it would be. Reaching out, he stroked Tony's face from temple to chin with the tips of his fingers, and then lightly grasped his partner's bearded chin and shook it.

"Relax, Tony, I'm just teasing. Actually, it will cost nowhere near that. In fact, I doubt if it will even cost more than my 'evil lair' did," Loki said mockingly, letting go of Tony's chin to add those 'air quotes' that Tony was so fond of using.

And relax his mortal did. And, while Loki was under no delusion that he would be able to keep this secret from Anthony any longer than he had his purchase of a house... However, he was fairly sure that once he had copies of everything having to do with the invasion of New York, and the creation and manufacturing of arc reactors, and one or two other items, it would be far too late for his mortal to do more than complain about it.

Chapter End Notes

WARNINGS - Brief mention of dub-con while impaired

.

Comments. Yeah, no matter how short, comments are lovely. :D (Kudos and bookmarks are nice too... just sayin')

Avengers, Iron Man, and Thor, are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

.

Chapter 3 - Chatting with Sif

Chapter Summary

A little one on one with Siffy!

Chapter Notes

Fun with Sif. For a certain value of the word of course.

Beta'd by the ever marvelous Stella and EmuSam. And then tweaked by me. Sigh... So any mistakes are mine.

Yay, I am going to see Thor and Hulk's Excellent Adventure tomorrow! Who knows, as a Loki fan, what horrors might await me there?? :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 3 - Chatting with Sif

Rose-tinted light streaming around the billowing curtains crept down an enormous longboat motif headboard. Polished wood and metal reflected the light's warmth, even as the cool morning breezes ruffled his hair.

"Jarv?" Tony muttered, squinting against the light, "you f'got ta override the w'dow wards again." A questing hand found no evidence of his partner, or even a warm spot under the covers. Not that Tony had really expected to find either.

Not that a slightly more awake Tony was the least bit surprised to find out he'd woken up alone in his bed, seeing as he had gone to bed alone after all.

Unhappy about it, perhaps, but not surprised.

Once he had finished dealing with Odin on that whole residency permission thing, Tony had spent what had been left of the previous day, and all of the evening in heartfelt negotiations with his trickster. Dawn had long passed, and a breakfast tray had been delivered to them in Loki's study, before they had finished working through the long list of ideas and suggestions that Tony had brought with him. Janis, Loki's AI, had taken detailed notes for them, and at the end summarized their decisions on each topic discussed.

Since Loki's schedule demanded that he be at the Bi-Frost construction site by noon at the latest, the disgraced Prince of Asgard, turned Head Engineer, absolutely had to get a few hours of sleep before his shift started. So yeah, Tony was bummed about that, but overall he was still elated that his god had agreed to the two of them living together in Asgard. Realizing that their reconciliation was still so very fragile, Tony had reluctantly decided not to push his luck by trying to talk Loki into coming back to his room to sleep.

Technically, okay, forgiveness had been negotiated and granted. However, realistically Tony knew that returning to the comfort of having his long legged god curled around him while he slept was going to take a while. So, he merely placed a chaste kiss on Loki's brow before shuffling off to his own room for a few hours of shut eye before getting to work on his own newly assigned tasks.

With Loki having more than a full-time job rebuilding the Bi-Frost, it was going to be up to Tony to handle the logistics of their new life on Asgard, without the godling as his native guide. Loki's AI, Janis, was at present was far too specialized and restricted to give Tony the kind of help he'd grown accustomed to Jarvis providing. And while Tony was of course looking forward to spending more time with his god, the details involved in moving to a place he was only vaguely familiar with were going to be challenging, to say the least. And without Pepper or Jarvis to help him, it was quite frankly not something Tony was looking forward to.

Except that he really was, looking forward to it that was, despite the inconveniences.

However, before crashing, he had send a message for Loki's head guard Aldfrig, and his own Ás accountant Varrin Braakson, to meet him in his suite after lunch. So, Tony wasn't going to be totally without help and local guidance. He just wished Pepper and Jarvis were also available.

Soon, he promised himself.

OoooO

Hlesey-manufactured polishing compounds were too soft. No matter how much time Loki's craftsmen had wasted testing the reformulations that Lord Hafji sent the Chancellor's office, none of them had been deemed suitable, and he was frankly tired of wasting time trying yet another submitted sample. He was right in the middle of dictating, via Janis, a scathing reply that the rocks in the Hlesey region were not going to get any harder no matter how many times they changed the binder material, when Lady Hlín, one of Queen Frigga's older attendants, interrupted him.

Pinning him with a steely stare, which clearly stated that she remembered him from when he was a babe toddling around in short clothes with sticky hands, Lady Hlín said, "Prince Loki, you are bid to attend to your lady mother, Queen Frigga, this evening in the main dining hall. Prinsgemalen Stark, who is currently meeting with the royal Steward, will be meeting you there."

Loki repressed his sneer at the once again mandatory use of his title, but did allow an audible sigh to escape him at having his work interrupted. Not that it did him any good. Hlín continued in a tone that would not have been out of place in a pronouncement from the Norns themselves, "It would be my honor to accompany you back to the palace."

This was, as Loki well knew, senior courtier speech for 'right fucking now'. And no, his brain was not being contaminated by years of exposure to Stark's somewhat crude speech patterns.

While the option to ignore her was always open, Loki was well aware of how well that would work. The wretched woman had more grey than blonde in her hair, and had reduced even stubborn old Tyr to toe-digging mono-syllables on more than one occasion. They both knew she was not offering him a choice of whether he 'would' leave now to get ready for dinner... But rather how gracefully he would bow to the inevitable and 'accompany' her.

"Janis, please finish my reply, use the last four as your model and have it ready for me to review before we send it tomorrow."

"Of course. I will attend to it immediately, Sir."

Holding back several remarks that would assuredly get him in trouble with the formidable dame, Loki gifted her with a wintery smile as he exited programs, and shut down his laptop. "If you wouldn't mind a short detour to drop off our power supply so Heimdall could recharge it for morning, then it would of course be my honor to 'accompany' you back to the Palace, Lady Hlín."

OoooO

Perhaps an hour later, while peering at his reflection, Loki noted absently that his hair was longer than he had previously ever worn it. However, since it was still far shorter than the length Volstagg and some of the older warriors favored, he wasn't too concerned. The thin braid drawn back on either temple was also not anything out of the ordinary for a warrior. However, just to be aggravating, Loki had started to weave strands of gold into each braid as an accent. Strands that were thick enough to be several steps to the far side of ostentatious. Or at least, he did on those occasions when he didn't just outright wear enough jewels strung through his hair that they resembled stars splashed across the night sky.

Odin of course hated both styles, but not nearly as much as he did the eye makeup Loki wore when he was, as Tony would say, Goth'ing, or Elf'ing out. Therefore, the one-eyed bastard should be counting his blessings that tonight was not a special feast. Otherwise, Loki would have definitely ditched the court garb for one of his decidedly non-Æsir outfits. Complete with enough hair jewels and cosmetics to make the old bastard burst a couple of blood vessels. And one of these days, when scandalizing the court no longer had that effect, Loki would go back to his leathers and slicked back hair.

Maybe.

Trying to please other people with his behavior had been an interesting experiment at least. But he'd done it without any noticeable benefit and now he was tired of even trying. Why should he have to modify his actions to make others feel more comfortable around him? No one else seemed to worry about how their actions made him feel. Loki had tried appeasing their sensibilities for centuries, for what felt like his whole life, and it hadn't ever really worked. Not in the long run anyhow.

Again, as Tony would say, Fuck Asgard. And again, his speech patterns were not being contaminated with Stark's lamentable vocabulary. It's just that his inner Stark had become the voice of his rebellion against all things Asgard. Or stupid. Which, according to that sarcastic voice of his subconscious, were pretty much one and the same.

Loki recalled how, years ago on Midgard, after one memorably bad lab session when nothing had gone right for them, he'd told Tony, 'The mark of low intelligence was continuing to do the same thing even when it didn't work the first ten times.' So perhaps it was time he started taking his own advice. Odin was never going to value him as he did Thor. Thor was never going to take his advice without questioning his motives. And Frigga... Loki wrenched this thoughts in a different direction. He **was not** going to think about Frigga's betrayal right before he had to sit at a table with her.

Besides, there was only one person he had to make happy now, and that was Tony Stark. Who, was in fact fairly easy to please since he didn't currently think Loki's behavior needed any modification at all.

Which would make him the first.

Loki's lip twitched up on one corner. Or, at least, Tony didn't think anything much need changed. And frankly, even the few things he had disapproved of, he had agreed to overlook since he, and

Loki had fought.

While Tony's solution of moving to Asgard had taken him by surprise, Loki found the idea more appealing each time he thought about it. It was something that had occurred to him more times than Loki would have thought possible during the day. The only question was, who is it that Tony wanted to live with? His Prince of Asgard? Or his pampered darling? Or perhaps, he wanted his lab partner back? Or his Trickster God? Business partner? Or the petulant brat that amused him so much? Or perhaps Tony liked that he never knew which Loki he would be dealing with? It was very possible that even Tony didn't know which one he really wanted.

After taking one last look in his dressing room mirror, Loki patted a few stray hairs back in place and felt a warm rush of emotion flood his chest. Since Tony hated being bored more than anything, and was also an insatiable spoiled brat himself, perhaps the mortal wanted a mixture of all of them. And if this was so, it would suit Loki just fine. He was, after all, an embodiment of chaos, and chaos was never any one thing. The image of Thor flicked across his mind and Loki felt his lip curl into a sneer.

And despite the Thunder god's best efforts over the centuries, chaos still did not *know its place*.

OoooO

Loki was perilously close to being late, but he did just manage to enter the dining hall at Frigga's appointed time. The long tails of his coat swirled around his calves as he made his way towards the head table, his curiosity to see what Tony had accomplished this afternoon hastening his steps much more than any concern about being late.

Per Tony's insistence, he was now flanked by four guards, rather than three. Since one now inevitably ended up fulfilling the position of a personal assistant or briefly absenting themselves to take care of some task or errand, Tony thought at least one more was needed. While Loki may not have agreed with him, the matter had certainly not been worth arguing over.

Lifting his chin, Loki strode through crowd. He fixed his face with, what might be considered a vaguely pleasant expression, as he gazed with inner disdain over the assembled courtiers. A few of the less frequent guests looked startled to see him in the hall, since he hadn't been there much in recent years. Or perhaps, they were amazed to see a state prisoner striding through their midst as if he, and not Odin, was master of the hall.

Lip curling into a one sided smirk, Loki thought that it really was a shame he had not chosen to outfit himself in one of the Álfheimr outfits this evening. It would have been a fitting way to remind the assembled crowd that he no longer had to struggle to fit in to their narrow view of what an Asgardian second prince should be.

Sif, wearing her armor as she almost always did, and looking to be in high humor, was determinedly making her way over towards him. Deciding it was best to meet whatever malice she was determined to share this evening in the public eye, Loki stopped in the clear area just short of the high table. That way, if she got too bad, he could at least move away from her. Something he wouldn't be able to do if he took his assigned seat.

"So, where is your husband, Loki?" Sif sneered, her manner every bit as charming as ever. "I heard he spent the day trying to decide what hovel you're going to move into."

Cow.

"Loki?" He looked at her with a confused expression. "My dear Sif, I am sorry. I wasn't aware

that you had married into the royal family. I am devastated that I missed the ceremony.”

“Very funny,” she replied, rolling her eyes in an overly dramatic fashion so he would know how little she regarded his riposte.

Loki injected a note of steel into his light tone. “My title, Sif; you will use it properly or I will have you ejected from the hall.”

“Now Loki, you know we have addressed you informally since we were children playing together,” Fandral soothed, coming up beside them.

Bile rose in Loki’s throat. As always, Fandral was willing to play the peacemaker. His selective pacifism was inspired not so much because he disagreed with the insults being flung by his compatriots at any given time, but more because he was too indolent to carry on an argument. Or be hauled into one if he could avoid it. Still, he did have a point. Once upon a time, he, at least, had been a friend. He had been Loki’s friend, in fact, long before he decided that the older, Crown Prince of Asgard, was more interesting to be around. Or perhaps he had decided the crown prince was of more use to him than the spare heir.

“Ah, well, of course, my friends can forgo my title.” Loki tapped his long index finger against his lower lip, looking with slightly narrowed eyes from Sif to Fandral, and turning his head slightly to glance at Volstagg and Hogan as they arrived. “However, none of you are my friends, nor have you been for many a year.”

While the others may have shifted uneasily at that statement, Sif simply shrugged. Their years of working together to try to keep Thor safe had not denoted friendship, merely a shared cause.

Squaring his shoulders and clasping both of his hands behind his back, Loki did a bit of shrugging himself, before flashing them a scimitar-sharp smile.

And because really it wasn’t like they could dispute his statements, he took advantage of their silence to continue, each of his words dropping like a cold hard rain. “Since, none of you could argue with the statement that we are not friends, I will have my proper due or see you all ejected from the palace. Doubtless, Thor will be able to get your rights of passages restored if you ask him.” He crinkled his nose in silent laughter. “Unless the Queen decides to overrule him, of course.”

Sif stepped forward angrily, her hand clenching at her belt where her sword was normally rested; her scowl was almost priceless. Loki glanced sideways to see the other three sliding away. His jaw slid forward a bit as his mouth dropped open into a wide open smile.

“Now, Sif,” he purred, “let’s try again. You were saying?”

“My lord prince,” she ground out belligerently, taking yet another step forward. “Where is your ‘husband’ today? Deciding what back water hamlet you are going to move to?”

A flick of his eyes let him know that the warriors three had made a clean escape. And seeing that everyone else was purposely not looking at them, Loki leaned down towards Sif, close enough that he could smell the perfume in her hair.

“Poor Sif.”

It was a toss-up as to what caused the outraged warrior maid to stiffen more. The words he used? Or the warm, apple-honey tone of his voice.

“No. No, please,” Loki pleaded with mock sympathy. “I do not say that to be hurtful, I merely wish to commiserate with you, such a faithful warrior and yet what do you have to show for it? There have been no grand wars since you have been in service. No chance to gain a tribute share, or win a even a small land grant.”

Loki leaned in further. Without moving, Sif glared at him from the corner of her eye, while his breath ghosted warmly over her ear, “My spouse is looking over my pitiable properties; nothing wonderful I admit, but you, my poor girl, with only a pittance from your mother’s estate, your monthly maintenance, and a room in the warrior’s hall to call your own. I do honestly feel for you.”

Loki moved forward a step. Keeping their bodies close, he pulled his face back enough that he could lock his eyes to hers. His finger traced a line down her cheek, not touching her, but so close that he fancied he could feel the warmth of her skin on his finger tip.

“Of course, there was always the possibility that you might have wed Thor. That would certainly have raised your status above mine.” Loki kept his tone friendly, but allowed her to see the malice glittering in his eyes. “And at one time I was one of your greatest supporters for that goal, was I not?”

“Loki... “Sif growled at him.

“Ah, ah, ah. That’s thrice. I rather think you have used up all your chances, Sif.”

“Lady Sif,” she ground out, anger tightening the skin around her eyes and mouth.

“Ah, yes, ‘Lady Sif’, an honorific which I could use if I chose, but not a title of rank that I am required to use. And to think at one time it could have been Princess Sif, and then in the fullness of time... Queen Sif.”

Loki chuckled, “But that time has passed, hasn’t it?”

“Do you think so, Prince Loki?”

“Oh, Sif, I know so. Do you know I have met the Lady Jane? She is a lovely woman, extremely smart, a serious student of higher knowledge. I am persuaded that she is just the woman to balance out Thor’s rather deplorable might-is-right attitude.”

Sif tried to ease back away from Loki, but he matched her movements smoothly, maintaining their almost intimate distance as he whispered in her ear. So close were his lips to her skin, he could feel the heat of her body.

“Granted the Lady Jane doesn’t look much like a royal princess right now, but I think with the right sponsor and a little assistance navigating her way through our admittedly rocky shoals, she could win over the court. And I know Thor would love to have a supporter in his quest to marry her.”

Sif stiffened further.

“He would... be overjoyed, in fact.” Loki’s head turned, his glittering emerald eyes locked onto Sif’s snapping black ones.

“Humf,” Sif smirked, “I doubt after all that has occurred, you have much influence in matters such as this, Prince Loki.” She started a bit when he took her hand and lifted it between them. After her discreet attempts to pull loose failed, she glowered at him.

“It is Thor’s greatest wish that I be his chief councilor.” His thumb intimately stroked down the side of Sif’s hand and over to her palm. “It is Odin’s express wish that I one day lead the crown council. As thus, I assure you, Sif, that barring a miracle that even I would have trouble calculating the odds of, I will always have a voice in any matters of importance I wish to.” Loki sighed theatrically. “However, that path to influence matters of importance and to raise your status is now closed to you forever. Of course...” Loki lifted her hand almost to the sly smile playing on his lips. “You might always improve your lot as I have by marrying money.”

“Hey! I’m good looking too,” Tony teased, having come up behind them unaware, sliding his hand up Loki’s and taking charge of it, before shoulder bumping Loki away from the affronted warrior. “Sweetie, I’m home.”

Pulling away, Sif wiped the contamination of their touch off her hand using the side of her skirt.

Loki’s eyes followed her movement, snickering at her apparent disgust. He was feeling very cheerful right now, although he would be hard pressed to say if it was Tony’s good cheer or Sif’s outrage that made him the happiest.

“So I see. Anthony, I was just discussing with Sif how I think that Lady Jane would make the perfect wife for Thor.”

“Well, it is not before time, she isn’t getting any younger and he is nuts about her, so if someone reminded him that proposal is overdue, he certainly wouldn’t have any trouble doing it. Hell, they’d have been married long since if Jane could have just channeled her inner Margaret Tate. ” Tony grinned at the Warrior Maid, knowing how it must irk her that Thor would even consider marrying someone he had known for only a little over a decade when she had been waiting for centuries for him to notice her.

“And they’ve been dating long enough, so it is certainly time.”

This time it was Sif curling her lip in disdain, “I think not. The lesser races cannot be made immortal without being challenged, and I doubt very much if a Midgardian could pass the All Father’s test; but then you wouldn’t know about that would you, Prince Consort Anthony?”

“Nope,” Tony said cheerfully popping the ‘p’. “But then, I didn’t have to, did I. I have my longevity on the rent-to-own plan. courtesy of the Queen. Tall, blond, dignified lady? I’m sure you’ve met her.”

Tony tugged on Loki’s hand and pulling his god closer to him and further away from Sif.

“Indeed.” Sif’s voice was sharp enough to cut granite. “We live a long time, Prince Consort, but what will you do when she passes?”

Tony grinned cheekily. “Oh, I’m sure something will come up, Xena; besides, my way is better.”

“Really?” Sif sneered.

“Yep.” A lazy smile tugged at Tony’s lips. “My way means if something happens to Rudolf here, I don’t have to worry about living without him for more than a decade or two.” After adding quite a few teeth to the smile he’d aimed at her, Tony turned to Loki.

“Ummm, Bambi, you really need to be more careful in public. I know you were just going all psycho crazy on warrior maid, but from a distance? It looked like you and Enyo here might be thinking about playing a little tonsil hockey. You wouldn’t want to start any rumors that might damage her good reputation.” Ignoring Sif’s outraged hiss, Tony tugged his raven haired god a

little more to one side before letting his hand go.

“And you are worried about that?” Loki arched an eyebrow with a playful note.

“Of course not, but sweets, you know neither one of us like to share. And I don’t think it is a good idea to let others think that your hotness might be up for grabs. They might try something, and then we might have a problem. Besides, it’s not nice to raise false hopes, you know.” Tony’s, *I am totally not jealous here, was the understatement.*

“Indeed. I will have to consider this. After all, I wouldn’t want to ‘accidentally’ make you jealous,” Loki breathed into his ear, so low that Tony could barely hear it, let alone Sif. Then the god pulled back and gifted him with a carefree, sunny smile, as non-Loki-ish an expression as Tony had ever seen on him.

And no, Tony’s eyes did not narrow slightly at Loki’s use of the word ‘accidentally’. Or if they did, it wasn’t enough for anyone to notice... with the exception of the smug good looking bastard in front of him.

[One on One with Sif - Stark Intergalactic Art by Batwynn](#)

Chapter End Notes

Comments. Yeah, no matter how short, comments are lovely. :D (Kudos and bookmarks are nice too... just sayin')

Avengers, Iron Man, and Thor, are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Chapter 4 – House Hunters InterGalactic

Chapter Summary

Frigga solves a problem in a way that enchants Tony.... Originally, anyhow.

Chapter Notes

Beta'd by the extremely patient Stella (KYMust) and EmuSam. And then last minute fussed with by me. So any mistakes are mine.

Please see the link below for a lovely sketch commissioned by the wonderful LadyMintLeaf.

And Just in case you missed the art for the last chapter.

[One on One with Sif - Stark Intergalactic Art by Batwynn](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 4 – House Hunters InterGalactic

Several days later found Loki leaning back against his favorite tree, in the Queen's private garden, a slate full of reports sitting beside him unheeded. Loki had just wasted two hours of time he could have used much more productively, brooding about Stark.

Tony, he reminded himself, absent-mindedly plucking a frond and stripping it to shreds.

He should have been working on his calculations for the next step in the Bi-Frost's repair, but instead he was thinking about that annoying Ex-Avenger who happened to be his spouse. Not that Tony was the most annoying Ex-Avenger; that honor would have to go to his self-styled brother. Loki's brow wrinkled as he considered that Barton, on the very few times that Loki had seen him over the last few years, had seemed determined to claim that title as his own. Perhaps Tony and Thor were better classified as Auxiliary Avengers these days, rather than Ex-Avengers, Thor more so than Tony. Loki hauled his wandering thoughts back to the topic at hand, that being Sta--- Tony.

It wasn't that he didn't have plenty of other things that he should be worrying about, like the Bi-Frost. However, as pressing as it was that Loki finalize the tuning algorithms, sooner, rather than later... He was still thinking about, or rather, brooding about his alliance with Tony, and of course the complications of their alliance. Most important of which was that such an alliance virtually insured that his influence in Asgard's court could only ever be as Thor's direct representative. Criminal status, could over time, and with the right atonement, be overlooked. It would take a while, even for royals, but it was possible. His Jotun origins, harder still, but in the end no one would want to set themselves in opposition to the All Father's wisdom. *Such as it was*. And besides, those with the power to turn *that* into an issue, also knew that Asgard's beloved Queen Bestla, mother of King Odin, and grandmother of Prince Thor, had been in fact a Jotun shape-shifter. They had just chosen to forget that little fact. No, the hardest thing for Asgard to

overlook, even in the fullness of time, was his ergi status. That pretty much eroded any personal influence he might have had as a second prince, leaving him dependent upon whatever clout an official position would bestow.

Loki closed his eyes, leaning back against the tree, letting dappled sunshine fall upon his upturned face.

He, of course, would need a plan to overcome the continued danger from Asgard's disgruntled nobility. Some were disgruntled due to their rage that they would have to pay deference to a Prince who was not only an ex-convict, but also now an acknowledge ergi. The ergi part of the equation was more important to them than the first. And of course, many of the others would have wanted to use his corpse as a stepping stone to advancement within the court.

But instead of all of those other items, or even his upcoming power transfer connection problems on the Bi-Frost, Loki had spent the last two hours thinking about Tony. Tony, the affectionate pejorative, who had surprised him by requesting permission to stay in Asgard from Odin. Now that was a meeting that Loki wished he could have scryed. Not that any such thing was possible, with the way Odin's office was warded.

"What did it cost you to get Odin to agree?" he had demanded.

"Nothing, nothing at all." Tony had said airily adjusting the cuffs peeking out from his finely tailored jacket, smugness leaking from his every pore as Loki looked at him skeptically. Tony put on his best innocent face, the one he used when Pepper was hot on his case, but hadn't yet figured out what he'd done wrong, and smiled sweetly.

The only thing this had got him was a set of green eyes glaring narrowly at him.

*"Fine, okay." He finally began with eye roll, which had made Loki huff. "I didn't **promise** anything. I wouldn't promise anything without talking to you; I'm not doing that now, remember? But.... I might have hinted that it couldn't hurt to have a project manager helping you on the Bi-Frost repair."*

So. The source of all his musings... Tony... had offered to help him, and had made Loki's approval a requirement for accepting Odin's permission to stay in Asgard. We live and we learn.

Perhaps.

At any rate, having gotten Loki to agree to the move, Tony was even now making the necessary arrangements to live in Asgard on at least a semi-permanent basis. Frigga professed to be delighted that the two of them would be setting up their own establishment. She thought it was high time that Loki got out from under the constant scrutiny of the court, palace guards and general staff. Tony, of course, just wanted them to have more privacy and a bigger space. And, most likely, some place Jarvis had complete control over.

Loki frankly didn't care which of his repurchased properties they would be living in. Even the smallest had at least one room large enough for him to exercise in. However, claiming transport logistics, Tony had initially dismissed even the closest as unsuitable. Hence, Tony's trip today with Frigga. They were going to view the two closest properties again. Close being a relative term; despite Frigga's thoughts on the matter, none of them were actually a convenient distance from the Bi-Frost. A doable distance perhaps, but not close by any means. Frigga, however, seemed to think that Tony was not seeing them properly and had insisted that they go see them together. She was sure they could be arranged to provide them with a comfortable home that wasn't too long of a daily commute.

Loki lowered his chin down to rest on his raised knee and breathed out a low laugh at the thought of Tony making do with a home that he didn't like, in a location he didn't want to be in. While Frigga, as the Queen of Asgard, was a formidable woman, she had no idea that she was not going to win this argument. While some of Loki's repurchased properties were fine indeed, it could not be disputed that none of them were exactly close to *'the action'*, as Tony put it. Furthermore, none of them offered the same level of opulence as even the guest quarters of the palace.

And that was the heart of the problem. Æsir thought accepted that all other dwellings in the realm would be inferior to the palace, where Midgardian thought was, if you had the funds available to you, you could live as well as anyone else on the planet. That was not to say that Tony's properties were the best that could be had on Midgard, but they could have been had he chosen them to be.

Involuntarily, Loki's lips curled up at the corners. Midgardians measured desirability quite differently depending on where and how one chose to live.

A very un- Æsir concept indeed.

However, even by Midgard standards there was no one else in New York City who had more square footage devoted to their personal use, in a more desirable location than Tony Stark. While Tony's home might be configured differently from many, it was configured in a way that uniquely suited the billionaire. And everywhere, even in his private garage, the craftsmanship was of a level that few others could obtain. No, Queen Frigga was very much mistaken if she thought Tony Stark was going to *settle* for what would be acceptable to the Æsir for the use of a second prince.

How this would work in Asgard, where almost all of the Golden Circle properties belonged to the crown and were only leased, Loki had no idea. Frankly, it might even be easier if they stayed in their separate suites within the palace, although he knew that was something Tony definitely didn't want, even if it would help ease them into being full time partners. But he left the problem up to Tony to solve. If nothing else, it would be interesting to see how his mortal would meld Loki's desired location, with his own desire for security, space and opulence. As if Frigga's task wasn't hard enough, Tony had overheard a chance bit of spite by Sif, concerning how that criminal and his 'mortal' should have been grateful they'd been allowed to live with their betters as long as they had. That had not gone over well, making Tony even more determined that he was not going to 'trade down' when they moved. In fact, he had only agreed to accompany the Queen today if she agreed to help him find a Golden Circle property if she was unable to convince him that one of Loki's current properties could be made suitable.

Which meant two things, Loki knew. One, the Queen had her work cut out for this afternoon. And two, when they did move, it would be to a hall in the Golden Circle.

OoooO

Loki was looking at him in disbelief, his eyebrows climbing towards his hairline. And not the piddly kind of disbelief that might occur when you open up the fridge and the container you clearly marked *'Mine - Don't anyone dare touch this'* had indeed been touched to the point where there was only one mouthful left in it, and that had only been left as an insult. Rather, it was the kind of disbelief a person might be pardoned for showing upon being told that not only had the Cleveland Browns made it to the Super Bowl... but that they had also won the damn ring. Gob-smacked might, in fact, be a better description for Loki's expression. But only if you added something about exponential growth, and maybe kicked in the rule of 70.

"You know," Tony said kindly, peering up in amusement at the raven haired god "slack jawed is *not* a good look for you."

“*You.*” The word dubious did not even begin to do justice to Loki’s tone of voice as he pointed a small carving knife at Tony. Not in a threatening manner mind you, but still any sized knife in Loki’s hands was enough to focus Tony’s attention. “After one day. *You. A mortal.* Not only have permission to *buy* rather than lease a Gold Circle manor, but have been given *several* to pick from?”

Pardonably pleased with himself, Tony preened, buffing his fingernails down the front of bright crimson jacket, carefully avoiding the stiff asymmetrically gold trim decorating it. The material of the jacket wasn’t fine velvet, but it glowed like it. And, it was soft enough to allow him to raise a nice shine on his, for once, surprisingly well-manicured nails. Tony spread out his hand and admired them, pretended to ignore his partner’s amazement. It wasn’t often he surprised his Trickster, so he thought he could be pardoned for savoring the moment just a bit.

“Stark!”

Now, openly amused, Tony leaned back in his chair, rolling his head to one side to give Loki a fairly toothy grin, the amber highlights of his brown eyes dancing with suppressed laughter. “Honestly, Lo. How hard is it to understand? Not to be mean or anything, but your closer estates are dumps. I wouldn’t house my car collection in them.” They weren’t really, but they were a bit utilitarian-- apparently on purpose, so younger sons would either stay in the palace where an eye could be kept on them, or be encouraged to beat feet way outta Dodge. If, he wanted to live somewhere nicer while lording it over the populace. “Anyhow, I convinced your mom that traveling so far out of the city every day was not only a time concern, but a safety concern. Longer distance, predictable route to the Rainbow Bridge, more chances to get jumped.”

Loki’s lips thinned, but he didn’t argue; he couldn’t. Stark was right. While in the populated areas of the palace, or anywhere in the neighborhoods surrounding it, a few rogue attackers would be quickly routed if they tried to assault Loki-- or at the very least be identified by witnesses-- it was unused corridors, outlying locations he mainly needed to be wary of.

“So she showed me all the properties leased by councilors who are being rotated out within the next year or two.” Tony waved his fork around, pausing it at a few cardinal points, illustrating with cutlery the circular path he and Frigga had taken while looking at manors. “Apparently, she plans on having Odin offer them some plum of a posting that will make their being sent back to the boonies a lot more palatable... If, they agree to relocate for their last year or so in office.” They both glanced over at Frigga, who was discussing something in a low tone to a not entirely happy Odin. “You pick which one you want and your mom will have All Daddy sell us a property that is worthy of you.”

Tony took a sheaf of papers out of his inner breast pocket; yes Space Vikings’ jackets had them also, and he pushed them over toward Loki. “These are the ones your— Queen thinks we have a shot at. The top two are the ones I’m leaning towards, but I need to know which you would want. Since this isn’t like Earth, we’ll only get one shot at getting a house close in, so we need to get it right.”

OoooO

Fortunately, Loki had been familiar with all the properties Stark had seen, what with having been in and out of them for centuries. He agreed that Star—Tony’s top two choices were the best in terms of size, style and suitability for their purposes, so he let him make the final decision. Tony, wanting to honor his agreement to let Loki in on decision making that affected both of them, initially was against that idea.

However, as Loki had explained to him, there was a big difference between Stark making a unilateral decision that would affect both of them... and Loki, *after having been consulted*, letting Tony choose because he didn't really care one way or the other. Or rather, in this case, there being no difference between the top two choices, as both would meet his needs for space, proximity, and presence. Magic was a bit more forgiving in terms of spatial requirements than physical engineering was.

It was a tribute to the Queen's determination that she got not only the current lease holder to agree to move almost immediately, but also got Odin to finalize the sale of Pliksted in record time, even going so far as to rename it Starkhus on all the official documents.

OoooO

Normally, Tony was still at Starkhus taking measurements and drawing up remodeling plans when Loki returned to his rooms in the evening. This evening, nevertheless, he had sent a message asking Loki to meet him in Tony's apartment.

Frigga was sitting in the main living area with Tony when the guards passed Loki into Tony's palace quarters. As always, she looked up eagerly when Loki arrived.

"Good evening, Queen Frigga," Loki said formally, bowing his head and placing a fist over his heart. Steeling himself against the disappointment in her face, he looked at Tony. "Anthony. Kvasir tells me we have a guest?"

"Yeah. Your mother," Tony said, ignoring the stiffening of both of them when he used that term and tried to get back on track. "Umm... Since it will cause us problems in the long run if everyone who serves the manor is Vanir, your mother thinks she may have solved our head housekeeper problem."

"You found an Æsir willing to work for a fallen ergi prince and their Midgardian servitor consort?" Loki's eyes widened and his face took on a mocking look of surprise and amazement. "One that can be trusted?" he asked unbelievably, continuing with an insolent lilt in his voice. "I pray you share with us, your Majesty, who is this gem of an Æsir that uses the Queen of Asgard as their reference?"

Twisting her lips in a strained smile, obviously pained that Loki would continue to address her so formally, and disrespectfully, Frigga called out "Marji, please come speak to the Prince and Jarl Stark now."

Loki was struck dumb. Exiting the small preparation room off the dining area, was his and Thor's childhood nurse, looking only a little older than he remembered. She had lively blue eyes and long beautifully braided silver white hair, more a contemporary of Odin's age group than Frigga's... But Loki stood, still thinking her as beautiful as he had when he was a child.

"Oh, Loki." Marji hugged him, pulling his head tightly down against hers. After a long moment she leaned back and regarded him fondly smiling. Loki had returned her smile when suddenly her eyes narrowed.

Startled Loki leaned back, wondering what she had seen that had upset her. Before Loki could think of what it might be, Marji let go of him, and putting her weight into it, she struck him across the face with a ringing slap that snapped his head to the side.

The blow also left a large red hand print on his left cheek.

Unable to move, Loki knew that he was wild-eyed even as his hand flew up to cover the stinging red spot on his face.

“And that is for making us worry! I was worried sick, sick do you understand? I couldn’t believe it when I heard about it. Your lady mother was inconsolable! Esja was beside herself! Don’t you ever do anything like that again, young man. Do you understand me?!”

Overriding his anger at being stuck, shame for upsetting her flooded Loki’s entire being. A feeling as strong as any he ever felt in the nursery. Wide eyed and immediately misty, he fought the urge to look away, and maybe scuff a toe on the carpet. Loki did take a large step back clasping his slightly shaking hands behind him, but Marji followed, grabbed him and held him in another, rougher hug.

In the background, he heard his mother take her leave of Tony.

After one last squeeze, Marji released him. “We won’t speak of it again. But you don’t do things without thinking anymore. You are too old for this. I am too old for you to do this.” She ruthlessly pulled Loki’s head down and kissed him on the forehead. “Now, you will introduce me to this Jarl of yours.”

“Oh I like her, we are so keeping you.” Tony laughed, walking over to greet Marji. “Come on, Flawed Design, introduce me to your nurse.”

Marji’s eyes narrowed again. “No,” she said, staring daggers at Tony while raising a finger to point at him. Confused, Tony looked over her shoulder to Loki for enlightenment.

“I don’t think Marji approves of you using nicknames.” Loki said wryly, rubbing his still reddened cheek.

“But I do that all the time. Give people nicknames. Sometimes a dozen different ones an hour.” Tony said, trying to maintain his smile in the face of the fierce glower being directed towards him by the formidable old nurse.

“Not that one.” She said flatly, pinching her lips together in disapproval. “That one is disrespectful and hurtful. We won’t be hearing that one again.”

Nonplussed, Tony frowned, confusion evident in his expression. “Or what? You take away my desserts for a week?”

“Prince Consort you may be. Jarl Stark you may be, but you will not address the Prince in such a disrespectful fashion, especially in front of the staff. Nor should you do so in front of anyone in the court. How can you expect others to act appropriately toward the Prince if you, his own partner, show him such disrespect?”

“Still like this one, Stark? Are we still keeping her?” Loki asked, amused as Tony’s color rose, staining his cheeks and the tips of his ears pale pink.

“Marji, you must forgive the Jarl, he comes from a realm that is much less formal than Asgard.” Loki licked his lips before gnawing on the bottom one a bit. “However, even as casual as Midgard is, I must admit that Stark managed to annoy most of them with his casual disregard for convention.” Loki tugged her towards the small couch in front of the room’s large fireplace. “I am so sorry I distressed you, Marji. Please sit and tell me what you are doing back in the capital? Does not your family still run Völsunghas? How is Esja? What is she doing these days?”

“Ah liten kråke, I will tell you all you want to know, but perhaps it is better if we settle our

business with your Jarl first?”

OoooO

Tony wasn't sure what all Nanny McPhee thought they needed to settle this evening, but he was game. He'd been going crazy worrying about setting up local staff, deliveries and all that crap. Plus, as helpful as Aldfrig was, he was not exactly local, so there were a lot of things he couldn't help Tony with. And frankly, it might be years before Jarvis reached his Earthgardian levels of usefulness, at least outside the manor and their personal spaces in the palace. Which Frigga said they were keeping for some reason.

Not paying a bit of attention to whatever Loki and Marji discussing, Tony looked at the white haired Æsir speculatively.

If we hire her tonight, I wonder if I can get her to go to Freya's with me, and get that whole mess out of way?

Perma link for a sketch commission

[Frigga Solves a Problem Art by the very talented Lady Mint Leaf](#)

Chapter End Notes

Trigger Warnings - None that I can see honestly.

Chapter 5 - You Set Me Up!

Chapter Summary

A nice Breeze, a pitcher of booze, and pleasant company could not make up for Tony having to go on an outing with the mother-in-law. But at least doesn't have to suffer alone.

Chapter Notes

Beta'd by the every lovely Stella (KYMust) and EmuSam. And then screwed up by me. So any mistakes are my so bad.

We have ART! But, I can't place it on the chapter because apparently it messes up people mobiles, so Please see the lovely sketch for this chapter, commissioned a million years ago by the talents and patient Jacklyn Hedlund.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 5 - You Set Me Up!

“Nice day,” Jane observed, once again hopelessly pushing up the full sleeves of her long ornate over robe. That garment being the astrophysicist’s one concession to dressing Asgardian during the day.

They were sitting on Tony’s palace terrace with a single pitcher of mimosa between them. Which was fine actually; with Darcy and her hollow leg on Earth taking care of some stuff for both Jane and Loki, one pitcher would be enough.

And while Jane’s autumn-colored garb might have looked a little odd framing her blue jeans, T-shirt, and sensible shoes, the coloring at least suited her. More importantly, when closed and belted, the robe hid her Earthgardian clothes enough that she could at least pass for a properly dressed Æsir. Except of course, for being a short brunette, in a land of tall fucking blonds. A failing Tony shared with her.

“So. Why am I here this afternoon?”

“Moral support, Janie. And I think the Queen wants to show you around a bit.” They did a synchronized eye roll that was so good it should have qualified them as Olympic contenders for the Sarcastic Freestyle Finals.

“Well, it can’t be because I know anything about cats, because I don’t.”

"Hey, then maybe Frigga wants you to scope them out so you can figure them out. Then she can pass on your preferences to Point Break when you become official and have your own place." Tony mused.

"I've never had a cat, I'm not even sure I like them." Jane's tone was calm, but her motions as she irritably pushed her sleeves out of her way, again, were not. From what Tony could see those sleeves seemed to be the Asgardian equivalent of Chinese Water Torture, at least so far as Jane was concerned.

"I don't think it matters, Janie." He refilled both their glasses. Some things were better done with a buzz in his opinion. "Apparently, they go with the hearth or some such bullshit."

"Well, they don't go with delicate instruments."

Tony took a big swallow of his drink and cocked a finger at her. "Now that. That I will agree with you on."

Tony raised his glass in a salute. "However, it will still suck to be you, because married women in Asgard get cats." Tony shrugged one shoulder, while Jane huffed, quickly knocked back the rest of her glass and then plonked it down on the table. Hard. "Look at me. The only animal I've ever been around was our cook's terrier when I was a kid. I've lived my whole adult life happily without a pet, but if *I* couldn't weasel out of this, even using the technicality that Loki isn't a woman, and we are partnered, not married, you sure as shit won't. "

"But why?" Jane almost wailed. Distractedly she again pushed both sleeves up past her elbows, and rested her elbows on the table. She hunched her shoulders up, looking at Tony beseechingly. Something Tony felt was totally unfair. After all, it wasn't like he was the one engineering this festive little outing.

"Hell if I know." Tony worked in a little shoulder action of his own. "To keep down vermin so they don't make a mess in the little woman's hall?" he hazarded.

"Tony. Seriously?" Jane's lips pressed into a thin, hard line, then she shook her head in disgust. "There are no vermin here that I have ever seen."

Tony's estimation of Jane's powers of observation took a nosedive. "Are you blind or what?" he demanded.

"Wha--"

"Did you, or did you not have lunch with the Fuckers Four yesterday? You and Pikachu?"

"Well, yes, but I don't--"

"Biggest rat bastards in Asgard, Janie. You'll need a big assed cat to take them on."

Jane snorted.

"I don't care Tony, I'm not getting a cat. I'll tell them I'm allergic or something."

"Oh yeah, that will work. Until the moment they give you a cup of grass steeped in hot water, with a few dried magic weeds and pronounce you cured."

"I'll just tell Thor I don't want one."

Tony didn't even bother to muffle his derisive laugh. "Yeah. Well, I bet you a thousand bucks against a month of pet sitting that you will most definitely end up with a cat. Thunder Britches is not one to rock the tradition longboat, you know."

Jane sighed, glancing away into the distance, refusing to meet his eye.

She also refused to take his bet.

OoooO

A few weeks later, standing in the newly renovated main hall of Starkhaus, Tony was just glad Janie wasn't around to laugh at him. While he had not originally had high hopes, Frigga had been so excited at how Loki was going to love the adorable puffball that Tony had selected... That he had sent his common sense to go sit down in the corner, while he allowed himself to be talked into a more positive frame of mind on the whole subject of felines. This is how he found himself down at the bottom of the main stairs holding up said fluff ball in a pose very reminiscent of that famous money shot from the Lion King.

Approaching the steps, one elegant hand on the hall banister, Loki had glanced idly over the rail, and then actually shied backwards.

"Anthony? *What* on earth are you holding in your arms?" Said elegant hand was now raised in... Horror? Disgust? Alarm? Tony was going to go with alarmed, since Loki's posture matching the alarmed note in his voice. For a long moment, it looked like Loki was trying to decide if he was going to continue down the stairs, or turn on his heel and flee back to their personal suite.

I knew this was a bad idea.

Tony supposed the only way this little introduction could have gone worse, was if the damn thing tried to scratch his face off, and sit on his head.

"House warming gift?" Tony tried to inject a cheerful note into his voice.

Loki had stood at the top of the stairs glaring down at Tony, who was still hopefully holding up the frickin' ten-pound fur ball. It was Tony's private opinion that kittens were not supposed to be this heavy. But much like everything else up here in space Viking land, nothing was normal sized. Or amused. Or enthralled, or any other word that meant a happy Loki.

Almost reluctantly, Loki slowly descended the stairs, the firm slap of each step echoing the staccato snap of his words as he explained '*exactly*' what giving a kitten to someone as a house warming gift meant in the land of Space Vikings.

"Leaving all of that aside Stark, you are supposedly a genius. What in the nine realms, did I ever say that made you think I wanted a cat?"

"Well, good day to you too, snookums. Okay, it's like this... It was actually your mom's idea, so you aren't allowed to kill me." The last bit was blurted out at such a high-speed that Tony was now wheezing.

Loki tilted his head and gave Tony a '*are you really that stupid*' look. And yes, for allowing Frigga to talk him into this, he would have to say, unfortunately, yes he was that stupid. "I'm not sure if you're aware of this, but the Queen can be a hard woman to argue with. And she was not taking no for an answer." Tony's arms started to sag from the furball's weight. The kitten, all twenty pounds of him, started to wiggle as Loki drew nearer, his movement causing him to almost slip out of Tony's grip.

Loki glared murderously down at him. "How could you talk the Queen into arranging for you to purchase a property in the Golden Circle," the god queried, using silky, honey-dripped, poisonous tones that Tony hadn't heard since the invasion of New York. "And you now claim that she is a

hard woman to argue with, concerning matters over a cat?"

The closer Loki got, the louder the kitten purred. By the time Loki made it to the bottom of the steps, Tony was certain Odin was sitting on his throne wondering what the fuck that noise was. A thirty-pound Asgardian kitten had a purr that sounded like a Cummins diesel with a missing muffler.

"At any rate, happy housewarming," Tony said, practically tossing the forty pound kitten towards Loki and fleeing towards the front door.

He figured distance was key here. After all, there was no way the fuzzball could worm its way into Loki's affections if Loki was busy screaming at him. So it behooved him to make himself scarce. It wasn't cowardice, it was more of quick step tactical retreat on his part.

"Stark!"

OoooO

It took a while, but Tony finally ran Frigga down.

When he finally did, she was in fact sitting behind a fairly plain, but exquisitely crafted desk. The Palace Seneschal, a couple of senior housekeepers, and some guy Tony recognized from the head accountant's office were listening to her attentively. Or at least they were until Tony pushed past the clerk in the outer office, and burst into the Queens's office. That act pretty much guaranteed him everybody's attention. Tony wiped his forearm across his face, and paused a moment, trying to catch his breath. Earthgardian secretaries were definitely easier to get past the old lady in the outer office had been. Tony was just glad that had been a grandmotherly type. And that Frigga's guards weren't stationed in her office, but rather outside in the hallway.

"We'll discuss this later," Frigga said hastily, standing and making shooing motions with her hand, indicating that she wanted her attendants to leave the office. "Obviously Prinsgemalen Stark needs to speak to me."

She observed him worriedly as she resumed her own seat, while Tony staggered over and sat in one of the chairs in front of the Queen's desk. Wincing a bit from the large bruise he now sported on his bicep, Tony ran both hands through his damp bangs, pushing them back away from his face. And most likely making him look like a spaz with his hair standing out in all different directions.

Did Natasha ever try to body block anyone when she was his assistant?

Frigga's office door finally clicked shut, the sound of it triggering an instant reaction from him.

"You set me up!" Tony accused unable to contain himself a moment longer. "Loki hates cats!"

Frigga's expression cleared. In fact, there was a tiny twitch one corner of her mouth as she fought not to smile.

"Of course not, Anthony. Loki has always loved my cats."

"Okay, maybe I'm missing something here, but he's really, really pissed. Something about cats being almost exclusively a girl thing here. With guys going for dogs, I guess? Why didn't you recommend I give him a damn puppy!"

Frigga sniffed. "Hunting dogs are not marital gifts, besides Loki has never been able to abide them. Once Thor and Loki moved to into their own rooms, Loki was constantly sneaking Friis into his

chamber to keep him company at night.”

Okay.... Since it was Frigga was the one telling this tale, Tony was just going to have to assume that Friis was the palace cat and not one of the maidservants. Still...

“But he flipped his shit when I gave Kis Kis to him!” Tony waved his hands in agitation, before wiping them down his face. Aggrieved and agitated did not adequately describe how Tony was feeling right now. Hell, it was all he could do not to cross his arms and pout. “You said he would like her! I don’t need help to get on his shit-list, *I’m already there*. And I certainly don’t need help *staying* on it; I apparently have a natural fucking talent for that!” Exhausted from emotions and dodging secretary and bodyguards, Tony sank back in his chair with a loud huff.

A notion occurred to Tony as he sat there pinned by Frigga’s gimlet stare. Tony thought that if he had tried half this hard to appease Pepper, he’d have been celebrating more than a decade of wedded bliss by now. Or at least, as much bliss as could be achieved by a match that had Tony as one of the components. Why now though? Why the hell couldn’t he have made this kind of effort then? At least Pepper had been willing to meet him half-way...

“Anthony Stark.” Frigga said sternly. Her displeased tone recalled Tony to the conversation at hand... Almost as if she could read his thoughts. Scary idea that. Worse was her using both of his names, with that tone. That was also more than a little unnerving.

Tony made a mental note to make sure she never learned his middle name.

“Such language is not appropriate for someone of your standing. Also, how is it that you lived with my son for all those years on Midgard without realizing that he will always reject and mock the things that truly please him?”

Okay. Not what he thought she was going to say, but... Tony frowned... Actually, he had noticed that tendency in Loki.

“Umm. Let me guess, someone took away his favorite books as punishment?”

“Odin, is perhaps not the wisest of parents--”

“That’s for fucking sure.” Tony muttered gaining himself another glare for his language, but almost a nod of agreement for the sentiment.

“It is only if Loki fears that his disdainful distancing is actually hurting someone important to him that he will admit he likes something, but only to them.”

Frigga sighed, looking around her room, eyes un-focused, as if she was looking into the past.

“Loki was smaller and weaker for so long that he got into the habit of never holding back in a fight. It was the only way he could hope to get the larger children to leave him alone.”

Scorched earth. A trait Loki seemed to have carried into adulthood. *Not that I can throw stones there*, Tony thought.

Frigga’s lips thinned as a look of remembered pain visited her. “Once Loki became too skilled at retaliation for the other children to risk a direct attack, they started targeting his possessions.” Frigga let out a lengthy sigh. “After all, a beloved stuffed wolf can’t fight back, stick your shoes to the floor or turn you hair bright blue.”

Okay...

The Queen looked down intently studying her hands before looking out the window with suspiciously damp eyes, and said disjointedly, “I managed to stitch him back together with my own hands. And my Seiðr. But I never saw Vanargand again.”

They sat there a moment lost in their own thoughts, Frigga recalling a stuffed animal that had meant so much to her son. Tony thinking of the false wall in Loki’s place closet with the secret cache behind. They had emptied it while getting ready to move, and there *had* been a scruffy dark grey wolfish looking thing in there. Not that he had gotten much more than a glimpse of it. Loki had hurriedly snatched out of Tony’s hands, rewrapping it lovingly in a tattered old blanket that had also been stashed in his hidey hole. Thinking about how he devastated he would have felt if someone had tried to do that to Dum-E, made Tony almost glad that Howard would never allow any other kids around the house.

“Once Loki came into his full power very few would actually move against him directly. So they started attacking his cherished possessions or the people loved. Thor, Odin and I were well protected and of course would never be targeted. But his other friends and favorite servants were not so lucky. I tell you this to perhaps explain Loki’s odd, mockingly affectionate public attitude towards certain people at times. And, no matter how he feels about you, Anthony Stark, be aware that he might very well allow people to think any affection he shows you is false, and designed only to irritate Odin lest you be targeted because someone thinks he truly cares for you.”

This also might explain why Loki was so knowledgeable about protective wards, Tony thought, and had learned ways to cast them even without his mojo. Loki was very determined to protect what was his, no matter what it took apparently.

Well, so am I.

The brown eyes that steadily regarded Asgard’s Queen were hard, flat, and unfazed. As much as his god pissed him off and as often as it happened, because truth be told Tony wasn’t the only entitled asshole in their relationship, Asgard really needed to be careful of triggering *Tony’s* own protective nature. In fact, Asgard had better hope they never caused him to have to protect what was his. Additionally, there was no way in hell that Tony was going to spend the rest of his long existence worrying about being turned into a weapon to hurt Loki.

“You know, Loki isn’t the only one who’s not good at letting other people know how he really feels.” Tony stood, stepping forward until he was right in front of Frigga. Bending over slightly, he rested his palms flat on her desk and leaned forward a bit. “He also isn’t the only one in this relationship who has a tendency to over react. People also need to be careful that they don’t irritate me.” Tony’s delivery was outwardly calm, but there was a flat metallic note in his voice. “I know a lot of Asgardians thinks I’m just a defenseless mortal, but my nickname used to be the Merchant of Death. And let me tell you there will be dead immortals piling up knee deep if anyone on this mud ball tries to use me to hurt him. Or provokes me into using my weapons and intellect against them to protect what’s mine.”

Tony leaned back. Crossing his arms, he tilted his head to one side and gave Frigga a wintery little smile, that didn’t reach his eyes.

“I am sure you know what I’m capable of, since it was you who sent your son into my protection the first place. *You* might want to try to get the word out on that so I don’t ever have to personally demonstrate what I did to earn that nickname.”

Permalink for Art [You Set Me Up! - Stark Intergalactic Art by Jacklyn Hedlund](#)

Chapter End Notes

[You Set Me Up! - Stark Intergalactic Art by Jacklyn Hedlund](#)

[Art was commissioned from the Talented Jacklyn Hedlund, please visit her page.](#)

Trigger Warnings - None

Chapter 6 - LoKitty!

Chapter Summary

This is the long awaited LoKitty One Shot... Seriously long awaited.... Like written in 2013.

Chapter Notes

This was originally beta'd by the ever marvelous Mima Mia like four years ago... and then the equally wonderful Emu Sam gave it a second look after I messed with it.

At any rate, here ya go. A little marshmallow fluff to go with your Turkey Day, Pumpkin Roll.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 6 – LoKitty

“Perhaps I should gift you with a hunting dog Tony?” Loki had asked that first morning at breakfast after the catling had been presented. The kitten was bugging the crap out of them, dancing across the dining room floor, climbing on the chairs and continually trying to get up on the table. The worst offense was when it tried to pinion its way up their legs and chests like some demented mountain climber. Needle sharp kitten claws snagged leather, pierced fabric, and most painfully, perforated skin on an almost constant basis as it tried to get into prime snuggle position.

“A dog?” Tony squeaked, his voice tight with alarm. “An Æsir dog?” While he would not swear they were all big, every dog that he had seen since he’d gotten here was at least as big as an Earthgardian Mastiff. The most popular Asgardian breed wasn’t a Labrador or a German Shepherd or anything normal like that. Instead it seemed to be the bastard cousin of a Russian Caucasian Mountain dog. But bigger. Tony swears he rode a smaller pony as a child.

There were probably no normal sized dogs in Viking land because the big ones most likely ate them all. Or maybe their fricken giant cats did.

“Loki, I told you, the Queen talked me into the cat. Please, no more animals, I beg of you. I am quite content to have robots. Besides Dum-E, and You would be jealous. So would Jarvis...”

Loki had merely humphed at him, finished his breakfast in silence and then went off to his construction office.

Later, Jarvis had said, “Sir, I cannot imagine being jealous of a canine. Although I do not think that getting a dog who would impart more turmoil into your already chaotic household is wise at this time.”

“Tell me about it, Jarv, we already have an Asgardian... eExcuse me... an Æsir Fur Ball of Destruction, so I am glad you agree with me that we don’t need a dog. Please try to give me a

heads up if you suspect that Loki is really considering it, okay buddy?"

"Cats are not generally regarded as destructive as dogs sir. Or as needy. But rest assured that I will make sure that Master Loki knows that you are better off with robots that can take care of themselves."

"And you think Kis Kis is less destructive than a dog Jarvis? Seriously?"

"I was of course referring to Earth animals, not Æsir kittens who weight ten pounds... And Sir, you know that Master Loki feels it is undignified for you to refer his cat as Kis Kis."

Tony sighed and snatched up the fuzzball trying to shred his sneaker laces. "Jarvis, how the fuck do you pronounce Furball's name again?" he asked.

"Scre-grr sir. With the accent on the first syllable."

"Scre-grr?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Skygge." It was Tony's private opinion there was no fucking way that Skygge-- as it was written in English, not the jacked up rune looking script that was on her collar tag-- should be pronounced as anything, let alone Scre-grr. He wondered for perhaps the twentieth time why Loki couldn't just name the damn cat the English version of her name. After all, he could pronounce Shadow.

OoooO

It had been weeks and Tony was still getting shit from Loki about the cat. Not even hiring Marji to finish kitting out the house had distracted him from sniping at Tony over it.

"I know your mom said your brother likes cats, but I think maybe she's wrong," Tony told Thor mournfully after his third glass of mead. Loki had come home in a foul mood this evening and Tony had been more than glad that Thor had stopped by, asking them to come out for a drink with him. Loki had refused, but waved Tony on his way, stating snappishly that he needed to go over some reports and would appreciate the quiet.

So he went, to a tavern. A real live stone wall, slate roof, and exposed beam tavern. He threw a disconcerted glance around the non-bar they were sitting in. What he wouldn't give for a bit of chrome, a few cheesy neon beer signs or maybe even a pool table or two. They were about three or four miles outside of the Golden Circle district, in a tavern that looked like it would be right at home in some medieval recreationist theme park. The tavern had an old timey, but clean look. Tony drew a finger across a haze of who knows what on the table surface.

Well modern day bar clean anyhow.

Apparently this was one of Thor's favorite haunts. Hammer Time had his special table, favorite waitress and everything. Tony wondered if Janie knew about the very well endowed Þórhalla. As a card carrying male, he knew he should just mind his own business. However, he did wonder if, as a fellow Earthgardian, he should give Janie a heads up. Even if it did cost him his man card.

While he had been glancing around wondering just how *favored* that Þór-chick was, Thor continued to consider Tony's almost forgotten comment. The engineer finally looked across the table at him and wondered, as he often did, if the Æsir prince really found thinking to be that painful process or if he was, as Odin had implied, just fucking with him. Tired of waiting for Thor to get up to speed mentally... Or stop messing with him, he kicked Thor's shin.

Hard.

Thor merely grunted.

“Cats? Why do you think your brother doesn’t hate them?” he prompted.

“Because he doesn’t.” Thor shrugged, “The first thing Loki changed into when he had mastered basic transformation was a cat.”

Really?

“A cat, Thor? Seriously?”

“Well, a kitten, actually. He was very young.” The god pondered the fire pit behind Tony with an abstracted look on his face, his lips curled into a gentle smile before he flicked his eyes to meet Tony’s. “Remind me to show you the pictures. Loki made an adorable kitten. He was so soft and tiny, completely coal black and he had enormous green eyes. His fur was sleek but very soft and he would purr loud enough to be heard in the hallway.”

“Yeah, well, he can be pretty adorable in his current form when he lets himself be,” Tony retorted, completely ignoring the skeptically amused look that Thor was giving him. He also ignored the dubious bowl of snacks that the waitress set in front of them as she brought them both new glasses of mead. “But I don’t see how something he did hundreds of years ago means he likes cats.”

“But he does,” Thor said with a small chuckle. He lowered his eyes to the table a moment, biting his bottom lip looking for all the world like he was dying not to start howling with laughter.

“Something you want to share with the class Thor?” Tony’s voice was just a bit on the impatient side.

Taking a small sip of mead from the new glass, Thor lifted his madly twinkling eyes up to Tony’s, and continued. “One day he went missing. Not just slipped away with me for a few minutes, but really on his own missing. It took Mother and his nurses the better part of the day to figure out what had happened. They and the guards searched everywhere for him. Mother walked all through the palace calling for him. Not noticing, in her distress, the small black kitten trailing far behind her trying to get her attention. Unable to find Loki she went back to his room to see if he returned there. When she couldn’t find him she was so upset she collapsed in his nurse’s chair and started to cry. The kitten climbed up into her lap trying to comfort her. When mother continued to cry, the poor thing became most distressed, eventually it jumped off mother’s lap and stood on a book lying on the floor, meowing loudly in order to get her to look at him. It was then that she realized that he wasn’t one of the palace cats and that it was the wrong season for kittens of that size. Then she noticed that the book the kitten was pawing was a book of basic transformation spells.”

“She realized then that the kitten was Loki?” Tony guessed with a small smile.

“Well she didn’t believe it at first. The spells in that book were far too advanced for a child of his age. But when she asked if he was Loki, he rubbed up against her and purred. So she asked him to perform a few simple tasks that a kitten would not understand... She had him walk to the fireplace and then tap on her left foot. Well, when he did, she almost fainted.”

“So she had him change back into a kid again?” Tony asked while Thor nibbled one of the weird deep-fried alien pig skin looking things from the snack bowl.

Tony could just imagine Loki doing something like that. Sneaking a book he shouldn’t have in the first place and studying it for days so he could amaze everyone with his accomplishment. Yeah

that was Loki. And seriously, the mental picture of Loki trailing behind his mother as she spent the day looking for him was just too precious for words. And again totally something he could imagine the devious little shit doing.

“Well... She called for a servant to go get Father, and Loki became alarmed and squirmed out of her arms running off. He wasn’t supposed to be practicing magic unsupervised.”

“Oh. Bad news there, huh?” Tony asked sympathetically. He kinda felt for Little Loki who just wanted to learn new stuff. Having been caught trying to take apart one of his father’s new cars, he knew first hand that parents of prodigy children were often notoriously unamused. Particularly when they had to deal day in and day out with kids that no one could keep a handle on.

“Indeed,” Thor said. “But at least this time we knew *what* to look for. He ran into Mother’s garden and curled up with Kjellfrid, one of mother’s oldest cats. She was washing his face when they found him.”

“So then they turned him back and he’s liked cats ever since?” Tony asked. Not that the story hadn’t been interesting, but he did need to cut it short. He had some serious moaning and bellyaching of his own to get in before the evening was over.

Shaking his head, Thor said, “No. Loki wouldn’t allow it. Perhaps he was afraid of being punished for disobeying. Anyhow he decided to stay with Kjellfrid until the All Father calmed down. Kjellfrid did not particularly care for Father. This, by the way, was when my parents first realized how strong Loki’s seiðr was. No matter what they did, they couldn’t turn him back. And when Father scolded Loki, Kjellfrid would growl, scratch my father, and try to carry Loki away and hide him.”

Thor was laughing loudly by now, and frankly Tony could see how funny it must have been... in hindsight anyhow. Apparently even as a little kid Loki was too much for the All Father to handle. Tony was kind of jealous, actually; he wished he could growl and scratch Odin when he was yelling at Loki. Or shoot him. Either or both would work for him actually.

“Well since your brother doesn’t have a furry tummy and tail... Not that those wouldn’t be amusing in a fairly creepy Furrries-fantasy kind of way... I assume they did finally figure out a way to turn him back.”

“Actually no,” Thor said, with a grin.

“No?”

“No. he was a kitten for well over a fortnight. He insisted on sleeping at the end of my parent’s bed with Kjellfrid, who growled if Father so much as looked at him. Mother was at her wits end trying to convince him to change back and return to his tutors--”

“Oh yeah. That argument would have *so* worked with me.” Tony scoffed. Thor nodded in rueful agreement.

“He might never have changed back if father hadn’t put his foot down and said that no cat who was not caught up on his lessons was going to Álfheimr to visit my Uncle Frey for the Harvest Festival. They found him transformed the next morning curled up on bottom of their bed naked. He wouldn’t sleep without Kjellfrid for months after that.”

“So that was the end of that?” Tony said in an amused tone.

“Well, except for Kjellfrid waking up during the night and returning to my parent’s bed. Loki

would wake up to find her gone and crawl up on their bed to sleep with her.” Thor’s grin widened. “Again to my father’s dismay.”

“It wasn’t until Kjellfrid had another litter of kittens, one of whom was Friis, did Mother finally convinced Loki that he had to stay in his own bed no matter where Kjellfrid decided to sleep. Loki eventually decided that Friis was an acceptable substitute for Kjellfrid, so he quit appearing at inopportune moments beside their bed at night. Afterwards, Mother never failed to find the whole story terribly amusing. She called him Kettlingur for the longest time.”

“Kettlingur?” Tony frowned.

“Kitten,” Thor said. His grin matching the wide one spreading across Tony’s face.

“Loki’s nickname when he was little was...” Tony choked, “Kitten?” He was unable to believe his good luck at finding out this little tidbit of embarrassing Trickster information.

“Indeed, Tony it was, but I don’t recommend you call him that. While Loki quite enjoyed it as a diminutive when he was a youngling, once he was older he became fairly vicious if anyone but my mother used it.”

“Not to worry, Thor. I wouldn’t dream of teasing him with it.” Tony smirked. “Much. But you have to admit it is the perfect nickname for him. Better than Rudolf or Bambi even.”

Later that night when they were walking home in companionable boozy silence, Tony considered the nickname. He had always thought that Loki was very much like a cat. A feral cat, sleek, graceful, gorgeous to look at, starved for affection but so skittish that he would attack anyone who offered it. He wondered sadly how much different the god must have been when he was younger, before all the crap that had warped his personality had started.

Tony imagined that Loki would have been the most adorable little fur ball in existence.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger Warnings - None

Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have commented, kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Chapter 7 - Live Long and Prosper... or not.

Chapter Summary

Tony discovers a way to insure his future comfort. And it doesn't involve Loki... or rather it does, but only as a go-between.

Chapter Notes

This was originally beta'd by totally marvelous team of Stella and Emu Sam. So it was perfect, until I futz'd with it at the last minute.

I am sorry this is late and short... but I have been packing all day, and tomorrow I embark upon a two day drive with an enormous dog, and two cats who will be singing the song of their people for multiple three hours stretches.

Messages of comfort would be greatly appreciated... and ease my travel trama. :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 4 - Live Long and Prosper... or not.

Tony hated when things didn't make sense; it offended the engineer in him, or something. He particularly hated it when it screwed with his concentration because his mind kept tossing up theories of what might be causing the mystery-du-jour, and how he could fix it. But, as with so many things in Ass-gard, Tony did not exactly have even the framework necessary to ask the right question, let alone come up with a solution. So he'd been thinking back on the conversation they'd had a few days ago, about how Jane wasn't getting any younger. And one of the thoughts he had just now recalled absent-mindedly, was that Foster didn't look much older either.

However, with the slower pace of life in Fairy Land, at least while waiting for contractors to finish with the changes needed in the basements of Starkhaus so he could start setting up his lab, he now had more time for these little side thoughts to actually be considered. And it was his considered thought that the last time Tony had seen Jane and Darcy together, Darcy had looked like Jane's older sister. Not that that was impossible, hell look at him... but he was pretty sure the entire Nine Realms would have heard Thor cheering if Janie had been awarded one of Asgard's Shiny Fruits of Approval. And from the amount of resistance Thor was getting from Cranky-One-Eyed-Guy, her youthful looks sure as shit couldn't be attributed to a servitor's mark. At least, Tony didn't think so.

While he still wasn't sure why this was aggravating him, he decided he could at least find out how it was occurring. Tesla knew that listening to his tall, dark and gorgeous god expound on the theory of cell rejuvenation would be a heck of a lot more interesting dinner conversation than hearing another blow-by-blow of something Spiffy and the Idiots Three did a couple of centuries ago.

"Seriously?" Tony asked, absently tearing apart a bread roll, while turning over in his mind what this information might mean. "That's why Jane is still looking so fine? I mean, look at her." He noticed with some smug satisfaction Loki's eyes flashing daggers his way.

“What else do you think,” Loki said testily, and Tony was at last clued by the jealousy flickering darkly within his god’s gorgeous emerald eyes. Tony turned his head away as a tiny grin broke out over his face. Loki being jealous of Tony, even if you would never get him to admit it, was... well it was a lot of things. Some things which Tony still didn’t even want to admit to himself. But it did make a little warm spot, in his chest, right where his arc reactor used to be.

“Do you see a rune on her wrist? While I doubt he has the skill to create one, it has to be there, on the pulse point of the left wrist. Even if he could, Thor wouldn’t dare risk the All Father finding out about it. He is holding out for a permanent solution. The Lifalengi potion does not require advanced seiðr, nor does it stop aging or heal injuries. It merely greatly slows down aging. It was normally used by the very rich to keep their paramours young when Midgardian pets were in fashion. Unlike your rune, which would require someone from the royal family granting it and updating it when it faded, the potion can be discreetly given, often without the knowledge of the pet and then discreetly withdrawn when the Æsir’s interest wanes.”

And wasn’t that the Asgardian way.

Loki’s lip curled in disgust. “A much more discrete method of life extension, requiring only large amounts of money. That as opposed to a much more public mark, requiring a royal boon, which would be granted in a way that could not be able to be hidden from a spouse, or any other interested party.”

“Oh, I guess that makes sense, in a creepy selfish sort of way.” Tony admitted, turning back to watch Thor speaking with a large group of warriors.

“A stop-gap measure I am sure, since Thor desperately wants to find a way to get the All Father to agree to his marriage with Jane.” Loki colored slightly, gesturing to Tony’s wrist. “That is normally the mark of a valued servant.”

“Hey, I don’t care.” Tony said flippantly, looking around for something else to catch his interest now that this itch had been scratched. A pale, strawberry-blond woman, and a blonder companion strolled in front of the high table, not going anywhere, just passing by, as they were wont to do. She was slender and tall, like most Æsir, and the way she wore her hair reminded him of Pepper. Numerous bits of fleeting thought finally slotted into place for him.

Feeling as if he’d been sucker punched, Tony’s hand tightened around the goblet he was holding so hard, his knuckles turned white.

“Loki?”

OoooO

Recalled from his habitual discreet scanning of the room’s inhabitants, the sudden tight tone of Tony’s voice had Loki’s eyes immediately taking one last look at their surroundings, wondering what could have upset his mortal.

“Why?”

Why? Why what? What had gotten into Anthony now Loki wondered.

With a final quick glance around them, Loki noted that they were now the object of several people’s avid attention. Puzzled he glanced at his partner, surprised to find himself the recipient of a heavy scowl.

“Tony? Is something wrong?” Loki asked, his brow furrowing in confusion, now painfully aware

that the various onlookers were no doubt hoping for them to have some sort of public spat.

Since there was absolutely nothing else occurring around that might have caused Tony's sudden bad mood, it had to be connected to their discussion of Jane and the lifalengi potion.

"Why not Pepper?" Tony ground out. "Surely you weren't afraid of a little competition?"

Flabbergasted, Loki fought to keep his expression calm. The one thing he did not want was for this evening was to provide more fodder for the court gossips.

"Well?"

Oh. No. Stark was not going to take that tone with him. Especially not over some slight he had nothing to do with. Onlookers be damned, he was not putting up with this. Narrowing his eyes, Loki asked coldly, "Would it have been a competition?"

Tony eyed him speculatively, almost, almost suspiciously, for a long moment. "Then why did you never mention it?" Tony asked, seemingly trying to keep his jaw from jutting too aggressively.

"Honestly, Stark?"

"Tony."

"Honestly, Tony, then." Loki snapped. "Please. You are supposed to be a genius. At least that's what you keep telling me. So, Mister Genius, how would I, watched as I was, be able to discreetly acquire lifalengi? Seeing as I had no money?" Loki hissed struggling to keep his irritation from giving rise to too much gossip, which unfortunately precluded him smacking something in frustration. *Stark* preferably, but he'd have settled for the table as a last resort. He ended up snorting bitterly. "The price of purchase, I assure you, was far more than even what my mother gave me to spend on you as a yearly stipend."

They glared at each other for a long moment.

Breaking eye contact, Tony glanced down at his cup, and said quietly, "You're right."

"Also, keeping in mind that even if I had acquired the necessary funds, from, say, you, the people who sell the wretched stuff would not take kindly to me approaching them with a couple of crown guards in tow. That's only if I could have thought up a semi-believable reason to seek them out. Which I could not have."

Tony took a long drink, placing his goblet back on the table, and pushing it a little further away with his fingertips. Scrubbing his face with his left hand, he sighed before peeping out from under lowered brows. "But will you help me buy some now?"

"For Pepper?"

"Well yeah." Tony said with heavy are-you-daft harmonics, since he wouldn't come out and actually say it to Loki's face.

"Not that I think the odds are that high that she would refuse... but knowing you, I have to ask. Are you going to tell her?"

"Ummmm." Looking semi-ashamed, but resolute, Tony met his gaze. "Maybe?"

Loki considered him for a long minute.

“On your head be it.”

Chapter End Notes

I do hope all my lovely readers had a wonderful week. Especially the ones who have commented, kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Trigger Warnings - None.

Chapter 8 - Tony doesn't do personnel

Chapter Summary

Not all conflicts in Stark Haus are between Loki and Tony. Heck, some aren't even between Mortal and Æsir.

Chapter Notes

Beta'd by totally marvelous team of [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , however, all mistakes are mine.

Sorry I missed last week. Yes I did safely arrive in the Land of Large Belt Buckles. And yay, no permanent trauma was inflicted on Midgardian or beast. However, fitting another person and moose-dog into the mix was a challenge, so last week was kind of a blur to me. Ie. No weekly update. My Bad. I will just go over here in the corner, and ang my head in shame.

READ AND HEED THE TRIGGER WARNINGS IN THE END NOTES

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 8 - Tony doesn't do personnel

It wasn't that Tony thought that living more or less full time in Asgard was going to be smooth sailing. It was just that the problems he ended up dealing with were much different than the ones he had imagined.

Like Eir running Tony down, while he was trying to make sure the contractors he'd hired understood the improvements he wanted. And the *time line* he was looking for. The last was very important. Asgardians, Dwarfs, and Elves had a fifty-years-is-a-drop-in-the-bucket way of looking at time, something that was frankly driving Tony right up the frickin' wall. And just when he thought they were making some headway, the old biddy insisted on dragging him to another room and haranguing him because Tony had insisted that Loki's Earthgardian doctors were still the leads when it came to directing his care. After twenty minutes of being growled at, he did become a bit testy.

"... after all, I have been his personal healer for several centuries, and--"

"And let's not forget he committed suicide on your watch," Tony interrupted angrily, completely and totally fed up with being fussed at. "Oh pardon me, attempted suicide. But let's face it, the only reason your personal patient of several centuries is still alive, is because Loki is harder to kill than a cockroach."

Eyes, practically spitting sparks, Eir glared at him, not really getting the entire cockroach reference, but understanding enough that her anger was becoming practically incandescent. However, Tony wasn't having it. He scowled right back at her, tossing another fagot onto the flames by saying,

“And, while you all seem to be taking that in stride, can I just mention how badly that terrifies me?”

Eir’s mouth snapped shut on what else she might have considered saying, before she spun on her heel and stormed out of the manor without saying another word.

And then there were Frigga’s ill-advised attempts to patch up her relationship with her youngest. Not that Tony was in any way opposed to her goal; because no matter what Loki said, his god had been devastated by their estrangement. So he was totally on board with the whole idea of them making nice with each other.

Even if Tony privately thought that she was an enabler for Odin and an apologist for Asgard as a whole. However, what he did object to was that every time she attempted it, Loki was in a pissy mood for at least the next couple of days. And frankly, Tony could have lived without that since he was still trying to worm his way back into Loki’s good graces, not to mention his bed.

And now, there was this.

“Why exactly are we taking the entire kitchen staff to Earth, Jarvis?” Tony asked looking up from the computer controlled door mechanism he was installing on one of the small side rooms off the main hall.

“I’m afraid I am not privy to that information sir, although Prince Loki had asked me to inquire about private cooking lessons from Chef Boulud at the Daniel.”

Awwwww crap. Tony groaned. *French food.*

French food is okay... and he knows Loki enjoys it. However, if he has to drag the whole circus down to Earth, he would much rather have them learn Chinese or Italian. Or better yet, Tex-Mex.

Rubbing two fingers against his temples, Tony made a face at the phone propped up on the table beside him. The StarkPhone being his main way of communicating with Jarvis until he finished installing all the security elements in the manor. “Jarvis, do me a favor and drop the prince crap, will ya?”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that, Sir,” his AI said apologetically.

Huh? Tony’s brows knit in bewilderment.

“What do you mean you *can’t* do that? I’m *telling* you to do that.”

“Unfortunately Sir, Karl Marji has told me in no uncertain terms that servants of this household will not address the prince with anything less than his title, but preferably with his title and name.”

Tony’s head dropped against the door frame. “You’re killing me here, Jarvis. You do not take orders from *Marji*. You only take orders from *me*.”

“With all due respect Sir, I did try to explain that to Karl Marji but she informed me that as Matselja of Starksted, dully appointed by Prince Loki and Prinsgemalen Stark, she has authority over all of the servants, myself included while I work in Starksted.”

“Marsela? And please Jay, don’t ever refer to me as Pringles Stark again.”

“Prinsgemalen,” the AI enunciated testily, “would be your title as Prince Consort Sir, *Matselja* is Head Housekeeper.”

“Jarvis, where’s Loki?”

“Prince Loki is in his study, Sir, do you wish to speak with him?”

Scrubbing his face with his hands and sighing to himself Tony wondered, and not for the first time, if he wouldn’t have been better off asking his old housekeeper Carol to come out of retirement and emigrate to Fairyland. She wouldn’t have had a clue what to do here, but at least she wouldn’t try to boss Jarvis around. “No,” he sighed. Not right now. Anything else she has told you to do, Jarvis?”

“Not really sir, I am required to attend all household meetings...” Tony briefly wondered if Dum-E was carting a Jarvis enabled StarkPhone household staff meetings or if in deference to Jarvis, Marji was holding them in one of the rooms that had already been connected. “...And she will occasionally let me know if one of the cleaning ‘bots has not performed to her satisfaction.” Jarvis paused a moment but before Tony could say anything he continued. “I do have to inform you that all the service ‘bots are now named and clearly marked sir. She wanted to be able to weed out any that were not properly doing their duties.”

Tony didn’t really groan, but he did make a strangled noise that possibly could be mistaken as one. He leaned forward, again rubbing both temples in an attempt to ward off yet another ‘Asgard Grade’ headache. “And if she ‘weeds one out’ then what happens, Jarvis?” Tony asked in the deceptively calm voice he gets when there is a very good chance that any moment, everything was going to go straight to Hell. Tony wasn’t really that concerned for the service bots, which were pretty interchangeable, but more for Dum-E, and You, who occasionally strayed out of his lab taking care of things for Jarvis. He wondered idly if Loki’s Minion was being also being watched by Marji. Or did he get a pass because he was Loki’s?

Then Tony realized it was Drill Sargent Marji Do-It-Properlydottir whose actions he was contemplating. She watched everything.

“Prince Loki told her that I am in charge of all the ‘bots. So I generally pull them off line for repair or to check their programming. Mostly they need their brushes replaced or sensor’s cleaned. Dum-E has been taking care of that. If it was a minor error, I tell her they have been repaired and they return to their duties. For more major transgressions--”

“Transgressions? Seriously Jarvis? For the love of little electrons, what kind of transgressions? I mean they’re ‘bots for crying out loud. So it isn’t like they are sassing the other help, or disappearing for too many smoke breaks.” To say Tony was confused with a side of irritation was an understatement. Seriously, how could glorified vacuum cleaners err to the point that it turned into a *transgression*?

“Repeatedly slamming into the wall and scaring the wainscoting in the receiving hall so badly that a craftsman needed to be called in for repairs was the last time one transgressed Sir. In a case like that, after the unit is fixed, we, that is Dum-E and I, rename and repaint the unit with a different designation before returning it to duty.”

Brow raised, Tony asked, “Why rename them?” Tony set down the mechanism, picked up a shop rag and wiped most of the grease of his hands. “Never mind, I got it,” he said, tossing the now greasy rag in his tool tote. “That’s fine I guess, as long as she doesn’t complain about You, Dum-E and Minion. But getting back to that prince thing, when we’re alone, just drop the honorifics, will you?”

“I will, of course, if you insist, Sir, but I would rather not in case she over hears us. Karl Marji has told me in no uncertain terms that this is her realm.”

Her realm?

"And while I may be a Midgardian construct of a superior nature, she advises me not to challenge her ingenuity when it comes to making sure that staff follows household protocols."

Oh no she didn't!

Pushing up off the floor Tony leapt through the still unfinished door into the hall.

"Loki!"

OoooO

Loki knew that Tony still had a long list of improvements he wanted to make, inside and out, before he could consider the manor truly livable. However, as far as Loki was concerned, the important areas of the house, bedroom, study, gym, lab, and receiving chamber were now perfect. It surprised no one, not Marji, Frigga, or even Thor, that the study was Loki's absolute favorite room in the house. And while it had been a spare, uncluttered looking office-slash-study, Tony had also liked it as much as he liked any space that wasn't a lab, media room, or better still, bedroom. Or, at least he had until Loki started filling the room with those books that he was able to repurchase from his previously confiscated collection.

"You know," Tony had said wrinkling his nose up in distaste, "I am pretty sure I can build you an automatic scanner that would digitize these damn things." Tony ran a hand down the face of the shelf, being careful not to actually touch any of the book's spines. Loki watched in amusement as despite not coming in contact with a single cover, his mortal suppressed shutter and wiped that hand off on one of his ever present band t-shirts. "Granted, it would have to accept some serious size changes, since apparently no two legendary wizards could agree on what size a freaking magic book should be." Tony huffed, glaring at what he considered unhygienic dust collectors of the more than a little creepy variety. "Just like they couldn't agree on what kind of leather to use for the damn covers. After all, you've got your dead sheep, dead goat, dead dragon," Again, despite his trying to hide it, a shiver had rolled down Tony's frame. "And for all I know, dead worse things, here as cover material."

Loki gave him, what Tony always referred to as his godly eye roll. "You are being utterly ridiculous; That is Elivágar snake skin, dragon skin is much too valuable to be used in book making." By mutual agreement, neither of them mentioned other types of bindings that were sometimes used by deranged mages. In fact, if it wasn't for his worry that digitized version of the book might be stolen and spread indiscriminately; Loki would have taken Tony up on his offer in a heartbeat. After all, warding his reference materials took a lot of effort, particularly since he was still working with restricted powers.

Tony didn't even care for regular books very much, and he liked magic books with their eldritch origins even less. Therefore, he was the one who insisted on installing rolling, rune encrusted, ithildin clad metal doors that automatically slid down over the book shelves the moment Loki exited the room, as an additional security feature. A security feature not to protect the books, but rather to protect *the house* from whatever imaginary nasty creepy crawly might be present in those books.

As Tony had muttered numerous times during the installation of those doors, most wacked out magic users were not nice people.

That was why Loki hit the control button to hide and secure all of his seiðr tomes the moment a clearly agitated Tony came barreling in the door. The comfort of having his tomes visible was not

worth upsetting Tony. Brushing a hand down one of the asymmetrical green details adorning the front of his black jacket, Loki sighed internally, hoping Tony's abrupt entrance didn't herald a major crisis, like running out of coffee again.

"Loki snookums, there you are! Did you know Marji has threatened Jarvis?!" His favorite, or least favorite depending on the mood, mortal asked with a too bright smile.

"What?" Relief that the manor apparently hadn't run out of coffee, warred with confusion.

What in the Nine?

Straightening up in his high backed leather office chair, a blank expression concealing his confusion, Loki watched and listened as Tony wandered around the room while detailing his recent conversation with Jarvis. Well, paced agitatedly and ranted actually. Not, Tony claimed, that he was actually worried about their grandmotherly house keeper taking down his AI.

Much.

"Tony, as helpful as Jarvis is, until we can find a way to safely integrate him into Asgard information systems, it is not like Jarvis has the autonomy to accomplished tasks like he did in your tower." Loki said soothingly, wondering if this was going to end up being one of those things Tony fixated on. As they had other problems to deal with, Loki sincerely hoped it wouldn't. "I have told Marji that while on Asgard, she is responsibility for all of our day-to-day-arrangements," he held up a finger to forestall the retort he could see hanging on the tip on Tony's tongue. "And, when we are on Earth, Jarvis is in charge. However, she is aware that if Jarvis tells her of a need or command expressed by either of us, she is to make it her first priority without question."

He raised a questioning brow, "Sufficient?"

Arms crossed, Tony scowled, something that seemed to occur quite a bit lately. While he couldn't be exactly sure, Loki thought it might be due to Tony having to deal with the unfamiliarity and frustrations, without his trusty CEO and a fully integrated Jarvis supporting him.

"I don't do personnel," Tony said scowling. "Besides, Marji was *your* nurse, not mine. So you have to fix this. Fix *her*. Whatever it is."

"Do you honestly think she is going to be able to harm Jarvis? Or would ever seriously consider doing so?" Which was silly, since Tony of all people should be familiar with exaggerated statements being made simply to drive home a point. His mortal was a master at them after all.

"So not the point, Dasher. How exactly do you intend to take care of this?"

What Loki was going to do, was certainly not approach Marji. The woman was not as intimidating as Frigga. But, Norns knew that Marji could make Lady Hlín back down four times out of ten. For that matter, his old nurse could have given Pepper Potts lessons in advanced intimidation. However, since Tony needed to be distracted from this topic, and Loki himself needed some tension relief, he decided there was only one thing to do. Pretending to be totally engrossed in setting his notes and reference tome in a locking side drawer, he said casually, "Take a bath, I suppose."

Needless to say, Tony appeared less than impressed with this pronouncement. "Are you fucking kidding me?" Tony's frustrated face screwed in disbelief, wiped one hand down his face and only just stopped himself from clutching his hair in aggravation.

"Yes. A bath. It has been a rough day," Loki said, standing up and looking him up and down

slowly with a mischievous glint in his eyes, “in fact, it has been a tough month, and I need some --- rather a bath.” Loki grinned wickedly at Tony before sauntering towards the door. “And no. You are not invited to join me,” he called over his shoulder as he headed out into the hall. “At least not yet.”

Chapter End Notes

I am curious... Would you rather have an extra chapter on Fridays or a Holiday Gift Cascade between Christmas and New Years. Let me know.

Trigger Warnings - Mentions of attempted suicide.

Chapter 9 – Not yet, doesn't mean never

Chapter Summary

Self indulgent home decorating? Check. High Tech surveillance equipment? Check. Slippery, soapy, Trickers Gods? Oh Yeah.

Chapter Notes

RATING CHANGE!!! - I have read far more in numerous YA's but I am erring on the side of caution.

Okay. I have no clue how this chapter came to be, except perhaps that at the time I was thinking the guys needed a bit of fun. Or as much fun as was possible at this point in time. And actually, it was a lot less fun that they were gunning for, and may have suffered for being toned down. Ah, well.

If you want to avoid the smut-lite, stop reading after XxxxX section marker.

Beta'd by [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , however, all mistakes are mine.

READ AND HEED THE TRIGGER WARNINGS IN THE END NOTES

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 9 – Not yet, doesn't mean never

Seriously? A Bath? A naked dripping Trickster God?

And just like that Tony's mood lightened. After all, it wasn't like Nanny McPhee was actually able to really do anything he reminded himself. And while he didn't care for people telling Jarvis what to do, any more than he liked them telling *him* what to do, Jay really was the new kid on the block, for now. Once Jarvis was fully hooked up, and had some experience under his belt? Then Tony would have a serious chat with Madame Ming the Merciless. Or rather, insist that Loki have one. As he's said, she had been Loki's nanny, not Tony's, so she was Loki's problem to deal with.

But right now? Tony decided that Loki's throaty, purring 'At least not yet' was possibly the most encouraging thing he'd heard this month. The roguish twinkle in his god's eye didn't hurt either. And no. Tony did not skip down to his lab, and fire up some of the security screens. He merely had a bit of bounce in his step as he congratulated himself that their master suite installation was complete.

At Stark Tower, Loki's third favorite room was the spa room. So much so, that Tony had popped a replica of the Tower's Japanese Hydrotherapy Spa-slash-party room at the top of his to-do list when he started remodeling the manor. Since he didn't think he was ever going to have any of those kinds of parties now that he was a married man and living in space Viking land, the suite was not tucked away at the end of its own hallway, but was rather part of the master suite. Mixing over

the top Asgardian garish materials with clean Japanese design, combined for an elegant space, that was completely worthy of his pain in the ass prince.

In addition to the huge multi head shower, steam room, and small cool water plunge pool, there was a deep spa pool with an Álfheimr belled water wall that was, even to someone as jaded to luxury as Tony was, frankly a show stopper. The lounge area had dual massage tables, a couple of chaise lounges, and fully stocked minibar. Tony had also required that the bath section be kept stocked with the Asgardian equivalent of bowls of kaffir lime, bottles of essential oils, various skin scrubs, soaps, fluffy towels, and jars of various scented leaves and flowers, both fresh and dried.

It was like karma really. He did something nice for Loki, and it just happened to end up nice for him too.

Very nice for him, as it was also part of the master suite security installation that was already complete.

Somehow, either because Janis was piggybacking on the Jarvis' system, or through some weird eldritch voodoo, Loki always knew when Tony was checking up on him through the houses security system. This pretty much sucked as far as he was concerned, because Loki could fuzz the cameras when *he* wanted to. Granted, Tony could have done the same by invoking the charm Loki had given him, but he couldn't detect Loki scrying the way Loki could detect him watching the cameras. Hell, if Tony could tell when Loki was watching, perhaps *he* would have been the one in the spa putting on enough of a display to lure his god back into their marital bed.

Loki might still be holding Tony at arm's length, but he had started to thaw a bit. As witnessed by the shows he'd been putting on with increasing frequency. Loki no doubt intended to use said exhibitionism to torture Tony. But also it seemed because Loki was starting to need release every bit as much as Tony did.

And hey, if his god was offering, Tony was going to accept. Heck, he regarded it as health insurance. Because he was certain that his health would suffer if he decided to 'dally' with anyone but Loki or his own right hand. And as he's already dodged his infidelity shot across the bows, and recently steered his cluelessly stupid ship into rough water, he wasn't taking any chances, no matter how blue balled he was feeling.

Besides the routine Loki has going on in the bath was so hot that there was no way it was not intended to tease Tony. Loki smiling slyly up at the camera, as he slowly strips, was kind of a dead giveaway.

OoooO

As soon as he calculated that Tony had enough time to settle into lab, Loki entered the large bath suite adjoin their bedroom. Taking a deep breath, he can feel the tension of his day start to drain away. And focusing directly on one of the hidden camera, he can feel tendrils of lust start to rise within him. In this, Loki's second favorite room in the manor, taking a long relaxing bath has become one of his chief pleasures. And doing it with a frustrated Tony watching? He felt a small smile tugging at the corners of his lips. Tormenting Tony by slowly and sensuously rubbing soaps and oils on his body, made it deliciously perfect.

Distracting Tony before he could work himself up over Jarvis and Marji was just a bonus really. Since he knew Marji wouldn't really harm Jarvis, he just needed to give Tony time to realize that Marji was their house's Pepper. And like Pepper she would come to appreciate and make use of Jarvis' many talents.

Leaning over the broad ledge of the soaking tub, Loki's fingers tapped a small control, causing warm water to start the tub's overflow cycle. Drawing a small circle in the water, Loki cast a scrying spell. Trembling on the surface of the water, a tiny image of Tony down in his lab appeared, cognac colored eyes, no doubt sharp with anticipation as they watched the multiple screens. Keeping his grin mainly internal, with only a tiny increase of the creases at the corner of his mouth, Loki banished the image by waving his hand through it.

Closing his eyes a moment Loki rolled his head on his shoulders to relieve some of the tension in his neck that always built up when he was going over the Bi-Frost accounts. Opening his eyes, Loki shook his shoulders a few times, before finally unclasping the thigh length jacket he was wearing. Sliding the metal accented, black emerald colored leather off, he tossed it carelessly on a nearby chair. Then, wasting no time at all, unbuckled the sides of the dark bronze chest and back armor and lifting it over his head with a relieved sigh. It always seemed like nothing he did all day, ever felt as good as it did to take his under armor off. This did seem odd in a way, since he had hated wearing loose clothing when he was a thrall. Even on Midgard, he'd gravitated towards more structured outfits. Or rather, as structured as Midgard clothing could be. After hanging his armor over the back of the chair that was holding his jacket, he absently tugged his thin, close fitting shirt free and pulled it over his head, muscles drawn taut across his chest and belly. Morphing this movement into a luxurious stretch, Loki balled up the material he was still holding high about his head into a ball, and pitched it in the general direction of the rest of his clothes. Not the least bit dismayed when it slithered off his leather jacket, in a puddle of finely woven pale green onto the slightly rough stone floor.

Stepping over to the long counter full of supplies, while absently unfastening the waistband of his black leather slacks, he let them slip down his hips a bit while gathering supplies on a gold and silver chased wooden tray. Lifting a matching lid off one of the several glass jars lined up along the back of the counter, Loki took out several small kaffir limes. Pulling a small cutting board and knife down from the shelf above the counter, he made quick work of slicing the fragrant fruit, tossing it into a silver bowl sitting on the counter. Except for one slice, which he nicked the rime off of and popped in his mouth. Shuddering from the intense sour flavor, Loki flicked a quick glance at one of the security cameras. Knowing how impatient Tony was no doubt getting, he slowly licked the tart juice from his fingers before stripping a nearby plant of several large, densely petaled white blossoms, and shredding them into the bowl with the lime slices. Huge rolled up towels, an exfoliating pad, two flasks, one foaming soap, one body oil, a jar of scented salt scrub, and a large goblet of wine joined the silver bowl on the inlay tray, which he then placed on a stand beside the steaming tub.

Glancing back at the supply shelf, Loki's let his eyes rest a moment upon a repaired glass whiskey tumbler, that was resting front and center in a place of honor. Kintsugi, the mortals called it. Fixing what was broken with precious gold. Since the breaking of that glass had been a lesson, Tony of course couldn't settle for just fixing it. The largest shard was now engraved with the phrase, ***'We are all a little broken, and that's okay'***. Loki hid a grin as he turned to take off his boots.

OoooO

Retaining the towel he had just dried his hands with, Tony was totally ready for this evenings entertainment. Ensconced in the first two of the three basement levels the manor boasted, his new lab was a thing of beauty. Enormously large, the well-equipped space sported everything Tony would need to create. And like his Stark Tower lab it even had a small lounge-slash-hiding area, complete with kitchenette, and bath, because you never knew how long you would be working. Or hiding for that matter. But this evening the most important part of the lab was his Tony proof leather couch, a dark brownish-black space Viking leather, that Marji had sworn would even repel axle grease stains... Placed right in front of a drop down, ultra-high def, big screen TV. Now, Tony

loved his holo-screens. He did, he couldn't live without them. However, until he could install an 8K television in his shower, or Loki invited him back to their nuptial bed, the lab couch and an ultra high def television were his go to location for wanking.

"Fire up the screen Jay. Give me a three way split for right now." Tony demanded, digging a few supplies out of lowest drawer of the small side table and throwing himself down on one end of the couch.

"If you insist, Sir," Jarvis replied with a hint of censure as the screen lit up.

Oh yeah. His camera and television resolution was so good that Tony could even make out the almost invisible dusting of freckles peeping out on Loki's left shoulder.

By the time Loki was done fucking around gathering up his supplies, Jarvis had already twice dissuaded Tony from hiring a full time bath attendant for the manor, or immediately adding daily bath prep to the upstairs maid's duties list.

"Perhaps we could explore various dried mixtures that won't suffer from being assembled ahead of time like fresh fruit and live flowers would, Sir. I could ask Miss Darcy to research what might be locally available when she is out shopping with the Lady Jane."

Okay, so that sounded doable. Tony was just about to agree when Loki reached for his pants.

"Shhhhh," Tony leaned forward watching the main screen, feeling his groin tighten in anticipation. He stared as Loki perched on the arm of the chair he had tossed his clothes onto. Bending over to take his boots and socks, he granted Tony an excellent view of the top of the god's ass due to his low riding slacks. Then, almost meditatively, Loki stood, and slid both his pants and briefs off, dropping them carelessly with the rest of his clothes. And since Tony couldn't fulfill his fondest wish of being able to climb into the tub with a wet, slippery Trickster God, he went with his next best choice. Lube already close at hand, he hurriedly unfastened his jeans, lifting up a bit so he could slide both jeans and boxers down. Groaning with relief as his own stiffening member was freed from what had been increasingly uncomfortable confinement.

XxxxX

Raking both hands through his loose hair, his elbows pointing almost to the ceiling, Loki stopped a moment. Closing his eyes, he took in a deep breath. With both hands clasped at the back of his neck, he was well aware of the picture he presented to Tony. All long lines, slender, but with well sculpted muscles, long blue black hair contrasting with his pale skin, now delicately flushed from the heat of the room. And tall. While he was attracted to all the rest, Tony had a weakness for those that towered over him. Loki allowed a soft smile blossomed across his face. No less than his own, did Tony's nature war against him. He wanted to look up to Loki; he wanted to be dominated by his god. Tony craved those moments when he could release control, and just feel. Memories of those times when Tony put himself totally in Loki's hands made dark desire pool low in the god's belly.

Reaching out with his long arms, Loki allowed himself a finger curling, back arching stretch; shaking the muscles in his shoulders loose, even as others tightened with delightful anticipation.

His mortal also relished the challenge of subjugating those considered more powerful than he. There is nothing Tony loved more than going up against someone who should have had the upper hand, and overwhelming them. In fact a good part of Loki's attraction to Tony, was that he never knew if he would prevail, or if this would be the time Tony swept all the obstacles from his path taking Loki firmly in hand and allowing his own respite of sinking into mindlessly sensuality.

Secure in the knowledge that his mortal wouldn't stop until he had driven every thought that wasn't connected to Tony ravishing him out of Loki's mind. And then continuing until he was bonelessly spent.

Soon he promised himself. Loki had not sufficiently factored in how hard it would be showing Tony the error of his ways, while experiencing the temptation Tony represented daily. Not that he would ever let him know this. Stark's undeniable skills had already contributed to Tony having an insufferable large ego. Still even he had to admit that his mortal was quite skilled in the bedroom.

Just the thought of which had Loki wrapping long white fingers around his cock for a few lazy pumps as his other hand curled against his stomach right where his mortal was wont to lay his head when he was teasing. Moving over to the bath, Loki seated himself on the wide, smooth ledge, pausing only to tip the contents of the silver bowl into the tub, before swinging his legs into the steaming water.

OoooO

Admiring the planes of his god's chest and shoulders, Tony knew that while Loki had a legitimate bitch with him, they have moved beyond that. Now, Loki was just messing with him. Standing in the thigh deep water, Loki used the now empty silver bowl to pour gently steaming water over his neck and shoulders, before replacing it on the nearby tray. Granted the bastard god could have just sat down to get wet. However, if he did that, he couldn't torment Tony by making him watch the water dripping off Loki's back and ass as he bent over to load the rough wash pad he liked to use with scrubbing salt. The hiss of pleasure that Loki always let out as he scrubs his skin pink really gets to Tony. So much so that Tony ended up biting his lower lip as he slowly pumped his cock, fighting to keep his eyes from drifting shut.

Shutting his eyes is something he definitely doesn't want to do as Loki pours water over himself and runs his hands everywhere to help the sluice off salt scrub. The water cascading down large swaths of fresh scrubbed alabaster skin, now tinted pale rose, are a glorious sight. But since he knows the best is yet to come, Tony shifted his attention to playing with his balls in an effort to keep from getting too excited, too quickly.

Placing the scrubber back on the tray, Loki picked up the flask and poured a generous amount of soap into his palms and began rubbing it over his entire body. And Tony is here to tell you that there is no way in hell that Loki would spend that much time dreamily lathering up, stoking his long, slender fingers up the outside of his soap covered thighs, over his hips and down the back of his ass if he didn't know he had an audience. Every freaking move was slow and graceful and like some kind of kinky hypnotic formal dance. One that Tony has occasionally thought to, for his later viewing enjoyment, adding a sound track to.

While Tony wouldn't admit to it, over the past few weeks, he had been known to drink a lime infused Gin Rickey, and then go lather up with Loki's soap, and toss one off. In fact right now, the remembrance lime on his tongue, and the smell of the vanilla, citrus, nutmeg, and wood scented soap caused his cock to twitch so alarmingly that he hastily thumbed open the tube of Lube.

With no more acknowledgement than the occasional side-long glance at one of the cameras, Loki placed his foot on the tubs edge. While Tony slicked himself up, Loki ran soapy hands from his ankles, up his calf, stroking along his inner thigh and murmuring in delight as he wrapped long fingers around his own half stiff cock. After lazily stroking himself a few times while humming almost absently, Loki lathered up his hands again to run them across his taunt stomach. Rather than going any lower, fingers that met just below his belly, instead slid up each arm to the shoulder before slipping down and paying a bit more attention that was necessary to his dusky nipples. So

much so that as his god rubbed and plucked them into perky pebbles, Tony ended up rhythmically pumping his cock, and biting his lower lip as his eyes drifted half shut despite his best efforts.

Normally pale skin, now flushed all over from a combination of scrubbing and lust was a sight that had Tony thinking of the last time that Loki's luscious rear had been tinted with that delicate shade from several well placed smacks. Because say what you will about his god being a diva, sex with Loki was certainly never boring. Part of what he'd always found so addictively attractive about the guy was the way he swung from being one hundred and twenty percent Boss with a capital B, to Brat with an extra side of adorable.

His eyes, which had drifted closed, flew open as he heard Loki start to moan.

At some point while Tony had been wrapped up in his own head, Loki had sank down into the tub, rinsed the soap from his body, and sat half reclined against the edge with a multicolored oil slick floating in the water around him. Heat curled tendrils of inky black hair warred with dark fluttering lashes as to which was creating the most contrast on Loki's flushed complexion. Muscles stood out across Loki's chest and the long column of his neck as he strained his head back with a stifled groan. Cursing the water blocking his view, Tony's breath caught as the piston like precision of Loki's stroking stuttered. Apparently slow and sexy teasing had been replaced with a need to get this thing done. Letting out his own a guttural moan of pleasure, Tony started rotating his wrist at the top of his stroke. Watching Loki writhing in the shimmering water, panting, his brows furrowed in the sweetest type of concentration...

All of it was driving Tony right to the edge.

"Stark!" Loki gasped hoarsely, one hand tightly grabbing the ledge of the tub. Loki's other hand was moving impossibly fast. With a cry of "*Yes! Tony, yes!*" Loki arched his back, pushing against the tub so hard, he lifted his hips part of the way out of the water. Loki's dark, almost purplish head visible as the shot milky ropes onto his chest and fisted hand, before disappearing again as he dropped back into the water.

With a few sharper, almost painful strokes, Tony gasped, making a mess of his own. Panting he fell back in his chair, chasing the last sensations of his orgasm as his eyes fluttered half shut. Water was still sloshing violently back and forth, when Loki took a deep breath. After several long moments, still slightly breathless, he turned to smugly stare directly into one of the cameras.

Maintaining eye contact, Loki reached over for his wine goblet, a sly grin spreading across his face, he lifted it in a mock toast, and said in a polished, baritone voice, "Well Tony? Did you enjoy yourself as much as I did?"

Chapter End Notes

What can I say? Comments are a gift to me that keeps on giving, in that they encourage more writing for you.

Trigger Warnings - Voyeurism and Ratings Change.

Chapter 10 - Being Helpful

Chapter Summary

In keeping with the spirit of this of year, a chapter where Loki decides to be helpful. Well, eventually he did. And keep in mind this is Loki's version of that behavior. Your perception of helpful may vary.

Chapter Notes

Here ya go, my second holiday gift to you lovely readersyou all. What do I want? Well chocolate, but until we figure out a way to push that thru an ISP Server without it melting, perhaps a comment no matter how short? Or holiday wish? Or a plot bunny you wish to share? :D

Beta'd by [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , however, all mistakes are mine.

READ AND HEED THE TRIGGER WARNINGS IN THE END NOTES

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 10 - Being Helpful

It had taken a while, but eventually, Loki had agreed that the Fatuous Four had to go. And being Tony, his mortal had also insisted that if they were going to get rid of Thor's posse, then Loki needed to make nice. While the thought of pandering to Thor was enough to turn one's stomach, he was willing to do it in exchange for not having to put up with those four ranged against him for the next four hundred and eighty six years... Four hundred and eighty six years, give or take something he was determined was not going to happen, that being a get out of jail free pregnancy on his part. When he and Stark procreated, it would be because they wanted that child, not because Odin was offering him his freedom in exchange for a mage born to the royal family.

Keeping his sighs internal, he focused again on Tony.

"It's not really fair to leave Thor with no one but Jane to turn to," Tony argued. "For one thing, I think he would drive her crazy. For another, if he isn't going to have his childhood friends, then he at least needs his brother back."

Loki had stiffened, pulling back to glare at him. Just because he'd agreed that those four thorns needed to be removed from his flesh, did not mean he wanted to make peace with Thor.

"Hey!" Completely ignoring that he was courting impending death by doing so, Tony reached out and swatted Loki's ass.

Hard.

"None of that now. You want those four idiots are gone? If so? He's your brother."

And then in a typical Tony move, one that made it almost impossible to stay mad at the mortal, he tugged, nudged, and pulled, while simultaneously twisting, until Tony was spread out on the couch. Leaning against the armrest, with Loki over him like he was a blanket. Ignoring the occasional disgruntled huff, he continued to arranging their positions until Loki's arms were at last wrapped around Tony waist, with his head tucked under that insufferably fussy goatee.

"Besides," Tony continued, as if he had not just spent the last few minutes arranging them both to his satisfaction, "if you take away his support system you need to be there for him."

Huffing, in a manner that Tony could take as agreement, if he thought for even one moment that Loki cared about Thor having him for a support system. Not that big buffoon had ever really needed him before, what with Odin, and all of Asgard cheering him on, no matter what stupid thing he did.

Idiot, Loki thought, not even sure if it was Thor or Tony who was the bigger one.

Regardless, Loki squirmed around until he was more comfortably bracketed between Tony's knees, his feet lying on the opposite arm of the couch, and his head tucked beside Tony's rather than under his chin. Privately relishing the feel of warm arms that tightened possessively around him once he'd settled, Loki reluctantly bit back a sigh of contentment. Not because he didn't deeply care for Tony, but because he had to. A challenge was the only thing that kept his mortal from becoming complacent.

Still that didn't stop him from enjoying having Tony lavish affection and attention on him. So much so that it was several moments before Loki could rouse himself enough to continue their conversation.

Finally, he mumbled into Tony's neck, "Asgard supports Thor, they always have. Even if Odin had anointed me his successor, Asgard would never have accepted me... and truthfully I never did want to be king."

"Of course you don't Bambi, and I wouldn't want to share you with a bunch of yahoos that can't appreciate how great you are," Tony said, giving him a bit of a hug. "But, that doesn't mean we're just going to let those idiots make things more difficult for us. Besides, deep down it would kill you if he totally botched that whole king thing when he took over. You would hate people thinking he didn't learn anything during all those years when you were his chief influence."

Loki pushed up off the couch, "Tony, if it comes between his happiness and yours, I will pick yours. Thor has abandoned me when I needed him for the last time. And, while you might often be an ass about the stupidest things, you have even stood up to Odin All Father on my behalf. Something my 'brother' never has."

"And why is that, do you suppose?" Tony murmured, with such a smug little smirk tugging at the corners of his mouth that Loki just had to roll his eyes.

Making a face, Loki intoned, in an obvious imitation of Tony's own voice and cadence, "Because... Nobody messes with my stuff but me."

Tony hummed happily. "That's right, and I think it's time that Thor's little friends, and the rest of Asgard realize that."

OoooO

"You know I am not really your mom's greatest fan," Tony had told him later that evening while

they were getting ready for bed, “but we are going to need her if we ever want things to change in this dump. Because Odin? I don’t think he’s ever going to budge without some major pushing from all three of you.”

Loki had stared at him incredulously for a long moment. “But, I guess Frigga can wait,” Tony sighed, gently brushing an imaginary wrinkle out of the sheets, before patting it invitingly.

Loki slid under the covers until he was pressed firmly against Tony’s back, spooning him with only thin sleep pants between them. He knew that becoming at least a semblance of Thor’s brother again would solve several problems. Not the least which was the background sense of unease from being at being at odds with the blond oaf. Besides, he thought before sleep took him at last, unlike Frigga, at least Thor had not spent his entire life lying to Loki.

OoooO

Making nice with Thor, was why Loki was practically lying in wait for the big blond idiot. He had spent the last two days sitting at his portable desk, officially listening to the tones of the growing crystal while reading over work orders. In actuality, he’d had one eye on his paperwork while the other surreptitiously watched the broken end of the bridge. It was not long after midday meal break when Heimdall winked out of existence, and then re-appeared a few seconds later with Thor.

There was, of course, a short gossip session with Heimdall, and a long stroll down the remainder of the Bi-Frost, before Thor reached the staging area where Loki was working, dropping his pack to the ground.

“Loki,” Thor greeted him carefully. Not yet looking up from his paperwork, Loki smothered a small smile. It seemed to be some sort of cosmic justice that the exact moment that he decided to make Thor his brother again, was when Thor would finally quit insisting on it with every utterance.

Saving his work Loki set down his stylus and looked up. “Good afternoon, Thor. You’re back early; we were expecting you to be gone several days.”

Thor huffed, obviously disgruntled at not being able to spend more time with his Lady Jane and visiting his Midgardian friends. “It was necessary; I have promised to present a works package to the Thing.”

Generally, public works packages were few and far between. And unlike the one Thor was getting ready to present, they were generally well publicized, if not bandied about for years before being presented to Odin’s council. Brows lowered, Loki peered up at Thor as if puzzled. “I hadn’t heard there was a works package pending. What kind, Thor?” Loki asked, pretending he didn’t know the answer.

“It is naught but a small bridge at Bandr pass. It will help the economy of the Hlesey, and Dalr Vestur.” Loki’s informants had given him the name of the enterprising soul who brought this proposal to Thor initially. And while that party wouldn’t benefit from a new bridge directly, Loki knew he had received something in return for side door access to the crown Prince of Asgard.

“Bandr pass? Really?” Loki frowned thoughtfully for a long moment, before saying, “Well far be it for me to make a suggestion--”

Thor’s snort interrupted him. Loki’s lack of suggestions over the last few years had been quite the sore spot between the two.

“Yes. Well, as I was saying. Before you stand before the Thing with this, I would definitely look into the credentials of the person doing the study for economic gain.” Loki drummed his fingers a moment, as if in thought. “And also, whoever did the construction estimate.”

A pained look that pasted over Thor’s face, since they both knew that Loki would not have even mentioned those items, unless an investigation was going to turn up a bunch of problems. He reached for the small side chair sitting beside Loki’s desk. Spinning it around, Thor straddled it giving him a tired look. “Bro-- Loki, no games please, just tell me why. I have all but promised to support this package. And if you know of reasons why that would not be wise, I would like to hear them.”

“Oh, I couldn’t do that,” Loki purred, knowing that to give in without rubbing it in, would immediately cause Thor to become suspicious of his motives. And besides, if the blond oaf had never felt the need to hire more than grooms or chambermaids, then he needed to do a little legwork on his own. At the very least Thor was at least a fifty years past the time when he should have started hiring an administrative staff. He had, after all, been heir apparent for centuries.

“Thor, check that the region as a whole benefits from this bridge, and not just that Hafji and his nearby family. Also, find out exactly how much it will draw down that district’s maintenance money in the future.”

An irritated and harassed expression drifted across Thor’s face. Loki lifted a brow in somewhat mocking inquiry, and it watched as the big blond hurriedly rearranged his features into something that could be taken as polite interest. Not that he really pulled that off. Thor never had been one for dissembling.

“And even though the span to be crossed is narrow, the rock is often rotten in that area and the supports may well have to start much further away so the bridge can arch. They may call it a small project, but with the funds that would be needed to complete it? I certainly wouldn’t.” Folding his hands, Loki made sure he himself radiated nothing but mildly polite interest as they sat there looking at each other.

“Unless of course,” he added when Thor didn’t say anything, “something has changed since the last time the royal engineers evaluated this bridge site. In fact, I would be sure to check with them, they may have some insights they could share with you.”

Thor darkly muttered something under his breath, along the lines that this was not the minor undertaking it had been presented to him as. “How do you know this?”

Letting a wide smile blossom across his face, Loki tch’ed, “Honestly Thor. Don’t you recall? Hafji’s father and uncle tried to get this passed back when we were pages of the region council.

“Mirm be damned Loki, we were practically in short coats then. We spent most of our time hiding from the chief clerk.”

“Yes? And where did we hide?” Loki allowed his brows to rise towards his hairline. “Oh that’s right, in the chamber gallery. Don’t you remember how mad Uncle Vi was the last time they tried to get this passed on to the Thing? He wouldn’t have anything to do with it and he had estates in the area that would have benefited.”

“Was that the time he went crazy because they kept insisting that he present it to father?”

“See, you do remember.”

“Well yes. I remember all the screaming. And that bloody big ax of his. Who wouldn’t? He split the damn table in two.”

Loki went back to his paperwork while Thor pondered the events of that long-ago day. Several minutes later Thor bid him a distant farewell, and continued towards the palace. Tapping the stylus reflectively against the surface of his desk Loki wondered who he was going to visit first. The royal engineers? Or the Volstagg’s son-in-law, who had asked him to present the works package to the Thing in the first place?

Chapter End Notes

Comments are a gift to that is always the right size.

Trigger Warnings - None that I can think of.

Chapter 11 - Mayhem Pondered

Chapter Summary

Some Asgardian tales of valor are a more than bit on the embroidered side. You can guess how well this goes over with Loki when they involve the Fatuous Four.

Chapter Notes

My second holiday gift to my lovely readers.

God do I want chocolate, but did I even get even one bag for Christmas? No I did NOT. So until we figure out a way to push that thru an ISP Server without violating our terms of service agreement, a comment no matter how short would be appreciated. As would plot bunnies, or speculation on who is going to be the first guest to Starkhaus. :D

Beta'd by [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , however, all mistakes are mine.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 11 – Mayhem Pondered

Nights like this that made Loki wonder why he hadn't yet let Tony, *pull the trigger*, and get rid Sif and the Idiots Three. As it was, it took every bit of self-control, learned over several centuries for him to be able to pick up his goblet with hands not trembling in anger. Of course, once he had the golden goblet in his hands it took even more self-control not to fling it down the table at the drunken idiots belonging to Thor. Or maybe it wasn't self-control, maybe it was more that he couldn't decide which one of them he wanted to knock unconscious. While Sif was indeed his usual first choice for retribution, this evening Volstagg was vying with her for that coveted spot. He took a long drink, banishing the tempting mental image of the black haired shield maiden laid out cold on the floor.

It was that same self-control that kept him from almost leaping out of his seat as an arm insinuated itself behind his back.

"Whoa, Bambi." A strong hand tugged him slightly, in what his mortal referred to as a, we-can-get-away-with-this-in-public, hug.

Tony then peered down the table at the raucous, drunken storytellers, who were taking turns regaling Jane with exploits that probably happened a couple of centuries before she was born. "I've got a mini repulsor in my pocket, if you'd like me to shoot them for you," Tony offered.

For the briefest second, Loki considered saying yes. Unfortunately, Stark was just crazy enough to do it. And while a single repulsor blast, or even several, probably wouldn't kill anybody, it would draw Odin's unwelcome attention towards them. And that was something that they really didn't need to happen. Although, truthfully, he wasn't sure if he would've made the same decision if he

could be assured that the blasts would be fatal. Setting his jaw, Loki took a long drink, and then turned his attention to Tony.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Yeah. Totally not buying that one. Something is usually up when you get all deliberate.”

Loki took another drink to hide his sneer.

“Besides when your nostrils start fluttering, I know you want to kill someone.” Tony then pointed his fork towards the storytellers. “So. What’s wrong with their version of that story?”

As if there was anything that was ever right with their damn stories, Loki thought, glancing towards his mortal with hard won impassiveness.

Tony made a face at him, raising one eyebrow in inquiry.

“Other than the fact that, by rights, Fandral at least should have been dead three minutes into that fight?” Loki asked in a low, savage tone, his jaw clenched so hard it was making the muscles of his neck hurt. “Not to mention the fact that their ill-considered angle of attack ended up stampeding the remainder of the herd towards the local mages who were supposed to be assisting us.”

“Seems to me they did stuff like that a lot.”

Loki took another long drink. When he was done he kept the goblet raised to hide behind. “Not that they’ll ever mention it,” Loki hissed, trying to ignore the low-grade thumping at his temples. “Or the fact that our cousin Fjölfnir was almost killed by their recklessness. I was weeks trying to get that smoothed over with our uncle Frey, the King of Álfheimr.”

“Yeah that sounds like them.”

“This should be told as a cautionary tale of the dangers of warriors failing to coordinate with others in their party. It should not be the drunken boasting of how they overcame the near disaster they mainly caused in the first place!”

Before he could take another drink, Tony reached over and tugged the goblet out of his hand, took a sip, and then set it on the table. Raising his voice so the others could hear him, he said, “You know, not that this all isn’t very fascinating, ‘cause it is. Honest. But I’m kinda tired,” He smiled at them all before lifting a brow and glancing over at Loki. “What do you say, Lo, shall we call it a night?”

Jane Foster glanced enviously at them.

“What?” Loki feigned disbelief. “And leave before they recount their bravery while telling Uncle Frey that the simple culling of Lady Gerðr’s mammoth herd had left his son and a half a dozen of his finest mages in the healing ward? Why?”

Loki’s brows puckered and he made a face that would be very much at home on a child being denied his favorite toy. “But, that has always been my favorite part of the tale.”

“Mammoths!” Jane yelped, whirling back to Thor. “You were hunting mammoths?”

“Indeed, we were,” Loki said, with poisoned sweetness as he pushed back his chair. “An entire herd of the giant *herbivores*, that had long ago been imported from Midgard as a wedding gift for Lady Gerðr.”

Sif and Hogun scowled, possibly about him, reminding them how badly King Frey had reacted to all the injuries, or perhaps more likely because he revealed that their grand adventure, was actually the culling of semi-domestic herd animals. Volstagg shrugged and gave an outraged Jane a sickly smile.

Fífl braggarts, Loki raged, as he passed behind their end of the table, he was barely able to restrain himself from smacking Thor in the back of the head.

OoooO

So Loki was in a mood. Not that Tony blamed him. Having to listen to Thor and those jerks go on and fucking on about crap that had happened five hundred years ago, that nobody cared about in the first place, sucked. And it really made Tony appreciate how much better he had it than poor Jane did. Unlike Thor, Loki didn't endlessly rehash past triumphs. And he went out of his way to avoid those that did.

Trailed by their ever present security detail, they traversed the long gilded halls to their skiff. The entire way back to Starkhaus, Loki muttered and hissed under his breath. Mostly about Thor surrounding himself with idiots, not that Tony could argue with that. Casting a sidelong glance at his Trickster, he wondered if now might be a good time to bring up an angle to the Asgard problem that he'd been meaning to talk to Loki about.

What the hell. Tonight was as good a time as any. While they'd drunk a good deal at dinner, Tony thought that a bit more might make this evening's conversation just a tad easier. With that thought he snagged up two glasses and a bottle of an Elf wine that Loki was partial to from the small drinks cabinet by the fireplace. And, seeing this was in Asgard, it was a big bottle. Big, apparently, was the only size that Asgardians would accept for their alcoholic beverages.

Not paying a bit of attention to what Tony was doing, Loki went and graced the couch with his sulky presence. Limbs spread out in an elegant sprawl; he scowled so hard at the fireplace that Tony half expected the pre-placed logs to ignite. Spontaneous combustion of nearby flammables was, after all, something that had a tendency to occur when his godling was really miffed.

"Okay, so I know you're pissed. But, you have to admit that Thor is getting better." Tony sat down on the couch beside Loki, placing the glasses and wine on the low table in front of them. "After all, he wasn't the one who started telling the saga of how the Mighty Thor, aided by his band of Merry Idiots, vanquished a bunch of furry elephants who were simply minding their own business overbreeding."

Loki huffed. "But he did join in readily enough. And did I hear him interject a single comment about the problems that the hunt caused? Of course I didn't, he never does."

"So? Thor was being a dick? What are the odds of that, huh?" He poured wine in both glasses and handed one to Loki. "Look, I don't have an older brother." Something for which Tony often thanked Tesla, Athena, and Maria's determination to be a social butterfly. "But according to Rhodey, and the guys I hung around with in college? I'm told that being a dick kinda goes with that whole older brother thing."

Loki snorted into his goblet, shooting an irritated, if slightly-amused-despite-himself, glance at Tony.

"Seriously. Look it up in the dictionary, it's part of the definition. Anyhow, yeah, Thor can still be a dick, but really pretty much all older brothers are at some time or another. The problem is you guys just live so long it kind of ends being dick to the tenth power." Loki didn't say anything, but

he also didn't make any noises indicating that he disagreed. So Tony would take that as a sign that he was at least listening to him. "However, he still is your brother. No," Tony said, cutting Loki in mid-scoff. "Don't you even bother denying it."

Surprisingly, Loki didn't pursue it, but instead grumpily held out his glass he refilled. Which Tony did. "Anyhow, someday Thunder-butt is going to be king of this place. So you might want to get this taken care of, sooner rather than later." He could almost see a cloud of despair forming over Loki's head, but rather than dispute the undeniable, his God merely slumped against the back of the couch.

Tony settled on the couch beside him, scooting over until they were comfortably shoulder to shoulder. There was just enough light coming from the sconces on either side of the fireplace for Tony to admire the pale amber color of the elf wine before taking a sip. "But you know I have to wonder... Since a big part of your problem with Thor seems to be the way he acts when he is around those four idiots." Tony rolled his head until it was leaning against Loki's shoulder. "I have to wonder, since even now you are dragging your feet. Why is it you've never really given getting rid of them your best shot. I mean, think about it, with all the opportunities they practically handed you... you could have just stepped aside." Glancing up from beneath his lashes, Tony watched his god's hand tightening around his goblet before green eyes glanced away.

In the several long moments that it took before he couldn't stand waiting any more, Tony had ample time to consider what kind of memories his words might have stirred up in his god. "So," he continued once it was clear that Loki wasn't going to say anything, "a rampaging Bilgesnipe here, a Wyvern having a bad day there... And without any effort on your part, those four jerks would've been toast. Yes?"

Lifting his glass, Loki drained it. Without meeting Tony's eyes, he held it out for a refill.

"You know," Tony said almost to himself as he poured more of the pale yellow wine in their glasses, "I'm not sure if this is a good idea; after all you're already halfway sloshed." Not that he had any room to judge if someone wanted to temporarily escape their problems by crawling into a bottle.

They sat side-by-side in more or less comfortable silence, Loki sliding lower into the couch, every time he nudged Tony to refill his glass. By the time the bottle was empty, Loki had shifted sideways until he was under Tony's arm, his long legs stretched out along the couch, his back resting against Tony's side. Which was fine with Tony, while he was not as far gone as Loki, he was comfortably buzzed. Eventually, Tony had set the god's now empty glass on the table beside him; he'd plucked it almost unnoticed from where Loki had been cradling it against his chest. Bottle empty, and the glass taken care of, he was more than content to idly play with a long strand of Loki's hair.

Waiting.

After a long while a slight stirring caused Tony to look down to see Loki's brows pulled together in thought. It was several long minutes more before his god spoke again, his words sounding like they were coming from a great distance.

"I suppose because once long ago they were also my friends. Not boon companions, not close at all, but enough that sentiment made me continue to assist them when they were in real danger. And besides, Thor was quite fond of them." Tony could feel a tiny shrug against the side. "After all, despite what they may think, I don't really wish them dead. It's just... They just enable so many of his worse traits." Loki's voice trailed off as he shifted, sliding further down the couch until this head was lying across Tony's lap. The hand that had been cradling his god slid down until it was

splayed across Loki's back, while Tony's other hand softly brushed the wisps of black hair trailing down the god's shoulders.

"I have several reports from my informants of what took place in the throne room that day Frigga made me king. Not that I actually remember, but they betrayed me you know." Loki glanced up at Tony for a second. Then his hand tugged Tony's wrist until it could insinuate itself under the hand that had been stroking his hair. Twining their fingers tightly together, Loki rested his cheek against their joined hands. "Even Fandral. Thor was not gone even a handful of days before they turned on me. All of them."

Well, it wasn't like that was any surprise or anything. Tony had figured that, in addition to downloading all the files Jarvis had about him and Thor, Loki would also be cross checking events leading up to his Earthgardian incarceration with his Asgardian spies.

While it was not light enough to be sure, Tony thought he detected a suspicious glimmering on Loki's lashes, and it was several moments before his god continued, his voice more strained than the matter-of-fact tone he was attempting. "While of course I can't be sure, because of the memories Odin stole from me, I imagine I sent the destroyer after them, not Thor."

"Or, at least I hope so," Loki sighed shakily as he rubbed his face.

Tony tightened the grip he had on his god's hand, and he softly stroked the hair at Loki's temples. "So... keeping in mind the Stark motto, the best weapon is one you only have to fire once, what are we going to do?"

Chapter End Notes

Comments are a gift to that is always the right size.

Reminder, this fic was written in bits and pieces over a three year span. Which is why they are kinda one-shots rather than chapters. Is this section somewhat disjointed?
Sadly, yes.

Trigger Warnings - None that I can think of.

Chapter 12 - Making Nice

Chapter Summary

Thor learns that the first part of solving a problem, is having someone pointing out to you that you have one.

Chapter Notes

My third holiday gift to you wonderful readers.

What? No one has any plot bunnies to share? Or even guesses on who is going to be the first guest to Starkhaus? :D

Beta'd by the ever patient [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , however, unlike Thor, I own my mistakes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 12 - Making Nice

Tony nodded his head towards the balcony drawing Loki's reluctant attention to where Thor and Jane were standing talking to Sif and Hogan. "Come on you, let's get the ball rolling."

"If we must," Loki grouched, since there was honestly nothing he wanted to do less, but Tony was right. It was time. He bent down slightly and breathed directly into Tony's ear, "The things I do for you, Anthony Stark." Tony turned towards him so none could see Loki's face.

"The things you do for us," Tony retorted, obviously amused at the mock weariness in Loki voice. Tony knew Loki was a consummate actor at heart. Hell, one of Tony's private nick names for his Trickster was '*Scheming Diva*'.

"It's show time, Buttercup; let's see your party face, 'kay?'"

And that he could do. Loki's joyful laugh rang out, momentarily stopping several conversations around them, including Thor's. Loki shook his head ruefully as if Tony had just told him an amusing story. Straightening up the god's eyes crinkled as his lips curled into a what appeared to be, a genuinely happy smile.

"Oh, yeah. That is what I am talking about." Tony breathed approvingly, almost painfully remembering how much he loved being around his Trickster when he was happy. However, they did have this evening planned, so no matter how reluctantly he steered them towards Thor. Rather, towards...

OoooO

His brother was delighted to see him come over towards them. Jane even smiled, perhaps more at Tony than himself, but that was okay. Charming Jane was Tony's job, not Loki's. Hogan, of

course, looked at dour as he ever did. Sif glared until a hugely smiling Thor turned his attention back towards her. Loki's own smile grew a little more joyful as she tried to paste a more pleasant expression on her face.

They chatted a bit, with Tony eventually steering Jane out to the balcony to stargaze while exchanging mathematical equations.

Loki remained behind, apparently pleased to discuss a recent exhibition fight for warriors wishing to qualify for the upcoming solstice melee. "Thor, you should have been competing," Sif told him.

"No, Sif," Thor said, looking somewhat wistful. "I am afraid my days of competition are just about over; I have other things that require my attention. Speaking of which, Loki, can you spare me a few moments?"

"Of course, Brother. Here? Or is this of a more private nature?" Every ounce of Loki's being radiated helpful goodwill. The inner turmoil that this would normally have caused him was mitigated somewhat by Thor's sheer delight in being called Brother. And of course, Sif's obvious disgust. Her distrust of Thor resuming a closer relationship with Loki was at least some consolation.

"Not exactly private, but perhaps requiring a bit of quiet," Thor replied, seemingly oblivious, but more likely ignoring the tiny huffs and grimaces of the long raven haired warrior beside him. "Perhaps we could go to the Glasir receiving room?"

"Of course." Loki agreed, indicating to Thor that he should lead the way. "Hogan, could you perhaps let the Lady Jane, and Antony know where we have gone?" Loki asked politely, pleased to see the minute shifts of muscle and the dark flashing glance that indicated only to the truly observant, that Hogan, no less than Sif, was displeased at doing anything, no matter how minor, for Asgard's fallen prince.

OoooO

"I did go and see the royal engineers, Brother, as you suggested." Thor told him as they traversed the halls, the Einherjar nodding respectfully to Thor as they passed, Loki's Vanir guards trailing them at a slight distance. "I am trying to do better you know."

"I was sure you had. And I do hope that your version of doing better is just not wishful thinking on your part, Thor."

Thor gave Loki what he no doubt thought was a withering glance, but decided to focus on the topic.

"However, I must admit, the proposal summation you left in my chambers was much appreciated." Thor continued sheepishly, tossing a look towards the man he regarded as his brother. "Since my own notes were somewhat scattered. It was good of you to go to so much trouble to point out the errors and false assumptions that were discovered the last time when the project was proposed."

Loki nodded, more to himself than to Thor. The wealth of facts available to him at his fingertips, were why he used this project to reclaim his adviser role. Plus, of course, the fact that neither Loki nor the House of Stark had interests in that area, not that that would stop anyone from claiming that Loki was trying to gain an advantage by weighing in on the matter.

The rest of the trip passed in silence, but the minute the heavy double doors closed behind them, Thor turned to Loki and asked, in his grave baritone voice, "Why?"

“I do many things, Thor, so I’m afraid you have to be a little more specific.” Loki said with a sidelong glance. He bypassed the room’s various seating arrangements, continuing out to the curtained balcony with Thor trailing after him. “Why what?” He asked, settling sideways on the wide stone balustrade, propping a boot up, and resting his arm on his upraised knee. He favored Thor with a politely interested glance.

Thor settled down in almost a mirror position, “Why not just give me your findings before I went to see the royal builders?”

“Now really Thor, where would be the fun in that?” Loki felt a sly smile try to steal across his face, he fought with it a few moments, wrestling his features into something more lighthearted, and innocent. Not that Thor was fooled for a second. While Loki might have often thought his sometimes brother was slow, he wasn’t that stupid. As witnessed by the looks that he was throwing at Loki.

“Can I not just assist for the good of Asgard?” Loki asked tremulously, resisting the urge to spread his hand across his chest in an extremely theatrical manner.

Thor huffed.

“You could, of course, I for one would rather you do that more often than not. But Loki, I am old enough to know better now and have grown weary of trying to best you in your own game. For once, with no more games, Brother, I would like you to just tell me.” Thor said flatly.

“You say that as if I have never helped you before without benefiting.” Looking unjustly accused, Loki continued in a sad mocking voice. “I’m hurt. Truly, Brother.” Pulling a woeful expression, this time Loki did not resist the urge to mockingly place his hand over his heart, signify his devastation at Thor suspecting him of trying to pull the cape over his head.

Thor’s pained expression tightened and his voice was low and irritated, “Loki...”

“Yes, Thor?” Loki asked, shifting back into the light sprightly tone he had used earlier. Tilting his head to regard his increasingly irritated not-brother, Loki knew he looked just like a youngling trying to charm his way out of an unauthorized tasting of festival cakes. They spent a long moment, just looking at each other, Loki maintaining his innocent expression, and Thor his exasperated one. Then Loki sighed, allowing his pose of pretense to drain out his expression and tone like water draining from a broken bucket.

“How long has it been, Thor?” he asked quietly. “How long has it been since you have accepted something from me without questioning my motives to the extent where I regretted even offering you my assistance?”

At this, Thor at least had the grace to look slightly abashed, but rallied to say, “You have to admit you usually benefit. But, do not doubt me for one second that I wish to trust you with all my heart.”

And while it pained him to hear it said Loki wasn’t the least bit surprised that Thor thought this way. After all, Thor’s friends had been dripping that particular poison in his ears for centuries. And while Loki would be the first to admit he wasn’t above manipulation to get his own way, what people failed to realize was that he seldom cared enough about what was happening to make it worth the effort.

Standing, Loki reflected that this was, however a superb lesson in the perils of hubris. Rather than blithely ignoring The Four as they dripped venom on his relationship with Thor, he should have either whipped them into line, or gotten rid of them years ago. A mistake he was going to be

rectified very soon. But first, he needed to come to terms with Thor.

As much as he wanted to cross his arms defensively, Loki instead gestured with his head for Thor to follow him. Making sure to keep his posture open and relaxed, he crossed back into the room's main conversation area, dropping gracefully right in the center of the large upholstered curve, his green and black silks standing out sharply against the gold and beige brocade-covered cushions.

"Is that what you honestly think, Thor? You think that I have only ever offered my advice when I can gain by doing so?" Loki asked, sure that he already knew the answer. For the most part, it wasn't that he set out to gain anything, it was he was so often offered incentive that it seemed pretty stupid not to take advantage of it. If people would just quit offering to make deals with him in exchange for this help. Although, he reflected, no doubt many of them did so to avoid actually having to thank him. And in that case, they deserved that he take with both hands. As he fully intended to today.

"Well, it's often true."

"Harmfully so?"

Thor looked like he would rather suck a lemon than answer, but after a moment he did.
"Sometimes."

"Is it? Or is it true that if you, or more likely if your friends look at something long enough, some detail can be twisted into a suspiciously plausible reason to warn you to be wary of me?" As if his past assistance has not helped Thor and, Asgard, numerous times? "I, too, am weary, Thor. Many times people, like your friends, would rather bargain with me for my help, rather than simply ask, and then express their appreciation. And frankly, I tire of the derision that your friends have spread for accepting deals they propose, and then chide me for accepting."

"They wouldn't--" Thor started to protest before Loki's spoke right over him.

"And think of how often they undermined your trust in me? I could easily have done the same thing these last few centuries. I could have destabilized your trust in Sif, and the other three by pointing out how many of their actions could have been for selfish gain. Ask yourself, who gains when you are isolated with no support except for theirs? And then ask yourself if the reverse was true, why I didn't act in a like manner, twisting their motives, until you mistrusted every action they took?"

Other than the fact that I stupidly never thought it would get this bad. After all that we had been through together, Loki thought, not without some bitterness at how he had foolishly never dreamed there would come a day when Thor would suspect every breath that he drew.

"Did you talk to any of them about the summary, I sent you?" Thor glanced away tellingly. "I imagine you did. And let me guess? They were instantly suspicious of my motives." Thor tried to say something, but Loki didn't give him a chance. "And despite you supposedly being ready for kingship, they questioned your intelligence for even reading it, didn't they? Not that any of them would assist you in such a way. After all, the only help they have ever offered you is hitting something until it bleeds out." Loki made a face, before finishing scornfully, "or accompanying you to taverns. Where they constantly encourage you to drink like an ale-sodden qlfuss, I might add."

"Loki, they're my friends." Thor said, mild exasperation creeping into his tone, and expression.

Sitting bolt upright, indignation stiffening every bone in his body, he surprised not only Thor, but

himself with the venom in his voice. "And I was... *I am*, your brother!" Loki spat. Loki was, however, glad to find that the pain he experienced when Thor was unthinkingly dismissive was no longer as sharp. Possibly because he'd outgrown the need for Thor's approval? Perhaps. But more likely because Loki had another avenue of affirmation now.

Tony.

"Loki, truly they gain nothing from associating with me." Thor leaned in, and would have laid a comforting hand on Loki's neck, if narrowed green eyes hadn't caused him to abort that gesture.

Leaning back a bit, Loki raised a skeptical brow, and in a carefully kind voice, not unlike what one would use to speak with a confused elder he asked, "Thor? Please tell me you don't actually believe what you just said."

"Well they don't," Thor ground out, more like a child refusing to admit a truth, rather than the man who would shortly rule over the Nine Realms.

Loki raised his other brow, allowing a bafflement to flash across his features for the barest instance.

How could Thor be so stupid? Or was he simply unwilling to doubt the last anchor, the one that in his mind has never failed him, that being his wretched shield brothers? Much though he was loathe to admit, Tony was right, he should have removed them years ago. And as much as Loki hated to be wrong, he hated it worse when he was so blind that Tony had to point it out to him.

Loki took a deep breath and continued in a gentler tone, "Thor, unlike them, I don't say their every action was for gain, but you do understand that they have spent centuries getting preferential treatment as your friends, don't you?" Thor deepened his frown and stared at the ground, but Loki pressed on. "The new warriors? The ones that made it through last week's tournament? What would it mean for their future if you were to befriend one of them?" A stony expression overtook Thor, but it was coupled with a deep flush tinting the skin beneath his blond beard. "Think of the advantages they would gain. The ability to pick and choose assignments, or be free of them all together to be at your beck and call is surely the least of them, and yet that would be a prize worth winning. Don't you agree?"

And from the way his body tensed, Thor was thinking about it. Something Loki would count as a win, even if the blond ultimately decided to turn his eyes from this cold harsh truth.

This time it was Thor that leaned back as Loki shifted closer, his tones low but urgent. "When was the last time Fandral, Sif or Volstag were actually rotated to a duty station? And yet they draw their pay just as much as the other warriors. They have access to the palace and courts at will, and the ability to suggest family members, or friends for posts that come open." Thor practically slithered off the couch, taking a few steps away, but Loki raised his voice accordingly. Thor had started this conversation, and by the Norns, Loki was going to finish it. "And because they are your friends, those family members have a huge advantage over all the other candidates in getting chosen for the best positions. Do you not think they would fight for that? That they would try to keep you to themselves? So their influence was not diluted?"

"Loki, they're my friends!" Thor turned and scowled at him.

"I was your brother," Loki retorted sharply. "And yet I was suspected of it all the time. If you never listen to me again Thor, hear me now!"

"No! And I do not suspect you, not truly!"

Breathing in sharply through his nose he asked, “Then who, Thor?”

Thor looked away for a long moment before almost sheepishly glancing back at Loki. “They claim you are only helping me again so you can be my chief adviser when father steps down.”

Loki allowed his face to twitch into a puckish little smile, complete with an artless little laugh.

“Well... Yes.” Each short syllable expressing how daft anyone would be to think otherwise.

Apparently this answer and Loki’s expression were too much for Thor, for he too burst into laughter, and covered his face with one large hand.

“In fairness Thor... Who better than I?”

Rubbing his eyes to rid them of tears, hopefully from laughter, but possibly from despair, Thor shook his head. Loki continued with his brows raised high in amused inquiry, “Jane? Sif? Hogan?”

“While I will accept that you have offered help numerous times in the past, just to be helpful, is there something you perhaps would like in this instance?” Thor groaned dropping his hand, shooting a searching glance towards Loki.

“It’s simple. Stark and I want to be left alone by the idiots that comprise the majority of Asgard. And if there is another way to achieve that without being the Chief Adviser to the throne, I certainly can’t think of it.”

Thor’s glaze tightened, “Is this the truth?”

Since subtlety was so often lost on Thor, there was no sense even trying it. Besides, right now distraction was what was called for. Therefore, Loki decided to go dramatic-with-a-pained-expression. “Why Thor, I’m hurt. Have I not always told you the truth?”

Thor at least had the grace to look abashed. “Well, yes. Except, for when you were on Earth.”

“Rather than lie, what do I do?”

“You distract people.”

“See? There you go. So with the exception of a brief time, I can’t remember, when I was obviously out of my right mind, why would I abandon a lifelong tactic of distraction when it has served me so well?”

Thor looked at him thoughtfully, biting on the side of his thumb.

“After all, where is my advantage in actually lying when distraction works so well?”

“Because--”

“Ah!” Loki admonished, interrupting him, “No matter what you and the others might think, it’s hardly lying if people forget that I haven’t answered their question. And I am truly not responsible if they supply their own answers.”

“Oh Loki.”

“Oh Thor,” Loki mocked.

At Thor's not amused stare, Loki took a deep breath, fixing his not-brother with an equally

unamused glare. “Look, if I had truly wanted to control you, I had only to let you be crowned and then sat back for a few turns. By then, your subjects would have been so disgusted with the ineptitude, and favoritism of your rule, that you’d have sworn to do anything I asked, if I could keep you from being over thrown.”

“I think now you are lying to yourself, Loki,” Thor scoffed, puffing out his chest and squaring broad shoulders.

Raising his hands in exaggerated surrender, Loki leaned back. His lips thinned as he regarded Thor for a long moment, before retorting, “Well, you just keep telling yourself that, Thor. I’m sure you will believe it eventually.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments are a gift to that is always the right size.

Do you realize this part of the fic was written and being Beta'd in March of 2016?
Arrrghhhh!

Chapter 13 - Loki is Impressed

Chapter Summary

The close of a year, and the close of an arc. Well, since it was so small, perhaps it was more of a curve. Whatever! Happy New Years to all my fellow Avenger Fans!

Chapter Notes

My fourth holiday gift to you wonderful readers.

I resolve to Art more, write more, comment more and even try a new ship. And of course, it goes without saying... to try to lose weight. :D

Beta'd by the stellar tag team of [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , however, unlike Odin, I own my mistakes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 13 - Loki is impressed

“Well, you just keep telling yourself that, Thor. I’m sure you will believe it eventually.”

Loki’s words had literally just left his mouth, when Thor riposted with, “Really, Loki, perhaps I may not have the flair for diplomacy that you have, but nobody has ever accused me of playing favorites.”

And the worst of it was that Thor honestly believed that. “Of course they don’t, you’re the crown prince, you dolt. Honestly, Thor, it is one thing to distribute favors because you are rewarding good service, but you should at least be aware of the number of benefits your favorites receive that others do not. That way, when the day comes, and *believe me*, it will. At least on that day, when you are accused of bias for your allies or friends, you won’t look like a newborn calf, wondering what they’re talking about. You have to be aware of all the things that can be considered favors, so you can at least refute these accusation with a list of deeds that your chosen ones were being rewarded for. Or in the case of a position being granted to their friends or family members you will know what merits that person has, other than nepotism, that you can claim enabled them to get the position. Keeping in mind, for instance, that Volstagg’s son-in-law, and Fandral’s cousin might not have ever been the first choice for the lucrative posts they were granted were it not for your affection for their sponsors. Favoritism, Thor, it can destroy the court’s faith if it is too blatant or uneven. Look at Álfheimr.”

Thor looked at him like a startled deer.

Sighing, Loki asked, “Thor, what is the one thing you must do if you really need the High Priestess of Álfheimr to give her blessings to whatever plan or agreement you are trying to achieve?”

Thor’s brows knit in confusion. “The High Priestess? Why do I need have a care of her? It’s Frey I

would be dealing with.”

“Yes, Thor, the High Priestess. Not Frey.” He waited a moment. Thor’s face took on a sulky look as he obviously couldn’t think of an answer. “Ivaldi?” Loki asked quietly, “Does that help? No?” Centuries of practice allowed Loki to suppress the urge to roll his eyes. But then he remembered that he was speaking to Thor, so he rolled his eyes anyway. “Honestly, Brother, you should know this.” Loki all but whined. If only because he knew Thor would be expecting it, from his brother, at this stage in their conversation. “If you send someone to discuss the matter with Ivaldi, during polite conversation she will invariably name someone at the Álfheimr court in passing. Once you have assisted that person to achieve a position, alliance or solve some trouble they are having, Ivaldi will summon her daughter, Lady Calia who is on the king’s council and make sure that she supports the plan. Frey has yet to disagree with any plan her daughter supports.”

Thor looked abashed; Loki patted him on the shoulder. “I know. So dreadfully corrupt and convoluted, isn’t it? And the people of Álfheimr? They hate that Lady Calia is so favored. Of course, since it is the only way things are done there, I’m sure you can always rely on one of your councilors to remind you about these little negotiating nuances.” Loki wrinkled up his face thoughtfully. “Unless of course, they don’t want your plan to succeed, in which case they might forget to tell you,” He consoled his elder airily. “But, getting back to the main point, blatant favoritism, intended or not, can cause resentment. And while your friends are quite good at bludgeoning people into submission, in these enlightened times, that is really not the preferred method of dealing with a restless court.”

Ignoring the Thor’s frustrated expression; Loki dusted his hands as if completing some great task. “I think that is enough state craft for one day. Now, we could just go back to the gather hall, or we could discuss a pleasanter topic, like getting you married.” Loki paused thoughtfully before continuing. “Although, since accomplishing that will involve scheming, perhaps we shouldn’t. After all, it is known by all that you hate any plan more involved than hitting something very hard.”

Despite himself, Thor let loose a noise that sounded like a rueful snicker.

“Well?” Loki raised one expressive eyebrow.

“Ha! Really? You would help me get permission from mother and father to marry my Lady Jane?” Thor barked an unbelieving laugh, most likely because Loki was not waiting for Thor to ask his assistance.

“Of course, how else can I get you so blissfully distracted and content that I have unfettered shadow rule from the halls of the court.”

Thor reared back with a roar of laughter while Loki grimaced at the noise and at himself for forgetting to habitually deny his 'not-parents'. “Truthfully, Loki?”

“Thor,” Loki deadpanned, with a dramatic eye roll as he stood up, and walked over to the big blond. “Did we not just go over this a few minutes ago? Surely, you have not already forgotten, that part of our conversation?”

Thor at least had the grace to look sheepish, “Aye. We did.”

“Well then we need to go speak with Mother. While I am sure she’ll agree,” Loki said, clapping an arm around his shoulders. Ignoring Thor’s startled, yet pleased look, Loki steered him towards the large double doors. “The knowledge that you are depleting your coffers to extend Jane’s life might convince her that speed is of the essence. At least, let us hope, because I am not lending you any

money. After all, you seldom paid me back.”

“What a vile untruth, Brother,” Thor laughed, “I do pay you back.” He looked up thoughtfully then added, “sometimes.” Slipping a hand around Loki’s arm, Thor pulled him to a stop, as the laughter drained from his face and a more serious expression replaced it. “What would you have of me in return for your support and assistance?” he asked quietly, his bright blue eyes fastened on Loki’s.

And so we come to the heart of the matter.

“We will come to an agreement, Thor. You will not interfere with my house and I will not give you bad advice. Yes?”

“We come from the same house, Loki.”

Excellent.

Never would Thor reflect on what was, particularly when the harsh realities were not something he wanted to dwell on. Loki suppressed a sigh, merely mentally adding that lesson to all the others he was going to have to drum into the blond head in front of him. However, now was not the time to point out that which should have been readily apparent to the future king of Asgard. Instead he made sure his tone and expression matched Thor’s earnestness. “So you won’t have a problem swearing to it? Not to interfere with my house?”

“Of course not brother.”

“Then, I would hear your oath, Thor, in exchange for mine.”

Thor shrugged.

“All right, I swear on my honor, I will not interfere with your house.”

Loki laid an outspread hand on his chest before saying solemnly, “And I swear on my honor, that I will always work for the greater good of Asgard, advising you thusly.” Loki made sure to keep his demeanor calm, as yet another important clue slid past Thor unnoticed.

OoooO

While Loki had indicated to Tony that his chat with Thor had gone well, it was several hours later when they were actually back at Starkhaus before they could really talk about it. And even then, despite nobody but Marji and Esja being allowed on the secure side of the manor in the evening, Tony waited until they were in their suite, an area Loki had rune’d to the hilt with numerous anti-snooping spells.

“Well?” he demanded as his fingers deftly flew across Loki’s ceremonial armor, undoing all the less accessible buckles.

Throwing a knowing glance over his shoulder, Loki smugly declared, “It’s done.”

“No? Really? All of it?” Tony almost tossed the Loki’s chest plate onto its rack, so he could turn back and poke his god with an impatient finger. “How?”

While he would never have admitted it, Tony knew that this evening could have gone south in a hurry. And hell, yes, he’d been worried that Pikachu might have taken it the wrong way. Not as much for what it would mean for them, i.e. he and Loki, House of Stark, but more so that it might have caused the rift between the brothers to worsen. He didn’t like it when Lo got all broody and

then declared, for the umpteenth time, that he didn't have a brother. That declaration was total bull, in his opinion. And it was an expert opinion, since Tony was the king of pushing people away before they could hurt him, and could spot that kind of behavior a mile away.

"You don't think you hit a little hard there?" Tony asked when Loki got to the part where he rubbed Thor's nose in his lack of awareness about the advantages his merry band of idiots enjoyed.

"No." Loki's long clever fingers pulled open catches here, and buckles there, as he finished opening all the hard to reach attachments on Tony's own armor, so he could lift it off of him.

A few minutes later, having made it as far as pulling off both his boots, Tony again interrupted Loki's recital again. Peering up from the dressing bench he was sitting on, he asked in a puzzled tone, "Wait a minute, how did Thor not realize that you are no longer part of the house of Odin."

Gracefully peeling off the tight leather pants he'd been wearing, and pretty much derailing Tony's train of thought, Loki tossed them aside before joining Tony on the long padded bench. "Tony, it is almost unheard of for the allegiance of someone with a higher ranking house to change. And even then, it only happens after a huge ceremony, with many oaths and documents releasing them from their house before transferring their allegiance to another."

Tony frowned, a vaguely worried shadow crossing his face. "We didn't have that though, did we? I mean, there were oaths and documents and all, but I don't remember Odin releasing you. So what in the heck is Thor thinking?"

"Like so many times in our past, Thor chooses to ignore what doesn't please him. Legally? Since our joining? It is only by the informal will of the royal family that I am addressed as a prince of Asgard. As a crown prisoner, accused of treason, and released in service to the state, I had no house. Therefore, Odin did not have to release me. The only thing he had to do, as King of Asgard, was allow you to accept a state prisoner into your house. Which he did in exchange for compensation." Loki leaned against him rubbing his apparently tired eyes with those long elegant fingers of his. "But I did make sure to tell him that he wasn't to interfere with 'MY' house, after which, his choosing to ignore my reduced stature does not negate the oath that he made to the house I am now bound to."

Tony crowed inwardly, *and that was why you shouldn't turn your back on my Bambi*. Snaking his arm beneath Loki's until he was snuggled firmly against his side Tony couldn't resist a smug snuzzle. His god crossed all the T's, dotted all the I's, and then handed you a knife, so you could, per agreement, slit your own throat.

And how fucking sexy, and adorable, was that? Tony thought proudly as he tilted his head up, nudging Loki's chin until the god peered questioningly at him. His face finally low enough for Tony to sneak a kiss, even if it was only on the corner of his mouth. The bastard was tall, after all.

"You are so hot when you are being all sneaky like."

"Well, if I am not going to kill the oaf, I might as well make him happy. He will have his kingdom secured, his brother back, his bridge, a new wife in Jane, and a new shield brother in you." Tony could feel him shrug, before he again laid his chin atop Tony's head with a long sigh. "Perhaps we'll even let him keep Fandral when you take the rest of them out. He at least is tolerable when the others aren't around."

Now it was Tony turn to shrug. And really, as jealous. And as possessive as Tony could be, like jealous to the Nth degree even, he really didn't care. That Fandral and Loki had once been besties, and maybe, he suspected, something more in their experimental years didn't matter. Fandral had

not only turned his back on Loki, worse, he possibly had only befriended the younger brother to gain daily access to the older one. That, coupled with centuries of siding with those other idiots, meant there was absolutely no chance of Fandral ever, not even in an Æsir lifespan, slithering totally back into Loki's good books. That Loki tolerated him the best out of the four was more a testament to how much his god despised the other three. Tightening his grip, Tony leaned into the hug he received in return, saying lightly, "A bit flaky, but yeah, tolerable, I could be okay with that." Tony's tone darkened and a scowl washed over him, "Unless of course he tries to cross us."

"Well, yes. Unless he does that," Loki agreed, untangling himself so he could stand, pulling Tony to his feet also. Somehow--Tony wasn't really sure if magic was invoked or not--but he found himself wearing only a pair of sleep pants, and being guided towards the bedroom.

"And do you know what the best part is?" Loki murmured, mischievously peering down at Tony once he had the engineer arranged to his satisfaction on the bed. "I swore to advise him for the greater good of Asgard." Loki nipped at Tony's lower lip, while keeping green eyes locked on brown.

"However, there is no guarantee that Asgard's good is going to be anything near what Thor might be expecting? Right?" Tony asked laughingly. "You fucking glow when you're pulling crap like this." Tony declared, wrapping his arms around Loki's back, and pulling the god flush against him. "Are you sure you aren't pregnant?" The trim torso above him shuddered.

"Norns forbid. Yes, I am sure. Can I help it if I am lit with an inner joy at the prospect of helping Asgard prosper? Not to mention, our house?"

OoooO

Less than an hour later, since both of them had places they needed to be in the morning, Loki languidly stroked the back of Tony's hand, while enjoying his own afterglow. A sleeping Tony was pressed firmly against his back, his slow breaths rhythmically warming Loki's shoulder blades while Loki's scattered thoughts turned over the last conversation he'd had with Thor that evening...

Thor had been initially ecstatic that Loki was going to assist him in his quest to marry his Lady Jane, his mood had apparently darkened as the evening progressed. Not helped at all, Loki surmised, when Sif and the three tried to monopolize him, and Volstagg started crowing about how his third daughter was enjoying her new position in the Chamberlain's office. After a pointed look from Tony, Loki suppressed a sigh, and followed Thor as he escaped out one of the small side balconies. The unexpected cloud cover blocking out the stars was of course confirmation that Thor might be unhappily pondering Loki's warning.

"It's not that bad you know." Loki offered, as he stood beside him.

"No?" Thor retorted with a grimace. "The realization that I've unwittingly been setting up the same problems here, that we take advantage of in our dealings with Álfheimr? Please tell me how that is 'not so bad'."

"Thor, you are not yet Asgard's King. So you have time to correct your mistakes before becoming one. Also..." Loki nudged their shoulders together, causing Thor to stop staring blindly out into the distance, and turn towards Loki. "While you may not know the political pitfalls as well as you should, your knowledge of Asgard's defense and offense capabilities are superb." Thor looked at him skeptically. "Quick. There are marauders threatening Harsheim, what would you do?"

Thor's brow wrinkled a moment for the briefest of moments. "Alert the Northern area commanders to immediately march, so they can act as backup for the Silver Shields."

Really?

Puzzled, Loki wrinkled his nose. “Why not the Star Battalion? Surely they would be better than a unit made up of reserves?”

“While you were on Midgard, it was disbanded. Everyone in it was either released from service or scattered to other units. All their banners were taken down and buried in the south pasture.”

“No,” Loki breathed, berating himself for not knowing about this change. “Why have I not heard of this?” He demanded, spearing Thor with his glare. “Might I be correct in assuming that old Bitr Salison finally allowed Sigurd to terrorize the wrong recruits?”

Lips tightly compressed, Thor nodded. “Over half the battalion was disciplined. And many of those were dismissed. It was all hushed up, years ago, long before you returned. While Commander Salison was banished to his country estates for allowing it on his watch, Sigurd himself was sent to our outpost watching Niflheim, as a laborer.”

“Really?” Loki made a mental note to expand his in-depth information gathering on the military beyond the palace and city units. And to look around and see what other long ago changes he might have missed. Lost in thought, he blinked several times before giving himself a small shake. Amazingly, despite having a major knowledge gap exposed, he suddenly felt his heart lift.

“Well, well, well. I’m impressed. There may be hope for Asgard after all, Thor.”

Chapter End Notes

Please let me know what you would like to see in the new year. Either in Fic or Real Life.

**** Trigger Warnings **** None whatsoever.

Chapter 14 - Boy Elroy does not fly Virgin Atlantic

Chapter Summary

Tony chats with, and makes a not to be refused offer to an old business acquaintance.

Chapter Notes

My fifth holiday gift to you wonderful readers. (As far as I am concerned the holiday season lasts until after January 7th)

Beta'd by the stellar tag team of [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , and then I sadly screw things up yet again. leSigh.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 14 - Boy Elroy does not fly Virgin Atlantic

“Tony?”

“**Ahgh!**” Head snapping around in surprise so fast it was a wonder he hadn’t done himself an injury, Tony beheld his god scrutinizing him as if he was insane. Tony, that was, not his god. This, however, was not to imply that Tony agreed when Loki accused him of being the crazy one. Although, if it was Loki’s expert opinion...

At any rate, Tony’s raven-hair-pulled-back-in-a-high-ponytail, brows-almost-to-his-hairline, casual-tunic-wearing, hotter-than-fuck Trickster god was staring at him in puzzlement. Not that Loki’s particular long-legged, leather-wearing gorgeousness wasn’t totally beside the point right now.

“I’ve had Jarvis and Janis calling you for over an hour. What exactly are you doing down here?”

And peeved. In addition to being hotter than humanly possible, his god was also slightly peeved. This, Tony had to admit, was most likely due to having to come down to the lab when Tony wouldn’t respond to any of his messages.

His surprised brain struggling to make words rather than random sounds, Tony flipped a tarp over his project, stalling for just a moment more until his grey matter managed to switch out of creation mode and divert a few brain cells to speech production. “Jarvis, what did I say about letting people into the lab without me giving permission?”

“I do apologize, Sir, but your orders were over-ridden.”

“Right.” Tony mumbled, ineffectually smoothing down his wrinkled and dirt-stained Avengers t-shirt, while casting a quick glance at his project to make sure it was completely hidden. “Right. Jay, remind me to fix up some manual locks tomorrow, okay?”

Loki slid over to the workbench and lifted a corner of the tarp.

“Hey! Nothing to see here,” Tony admonished, lightly slapping the god’s hands away, and tugging the tarp back into place. “So? Any chance you could go ask Marji to whip us up some stir-fry for dinner tonight? Then we’ll watch some videos. Or better yet, tell Marji to set dinner up in the entertainment room?”

“Jarvis?”

“I will inform her immediately, your Highness.”

“Thank you,” Loki said absently, turning to study the various debris piles heaped around Tony’s current work area in the lab, his fingers trailing on the an uncovered section of the work bench.

“Tony?” Loki’s forehead furrowed in puzzlement as he turned his gaze upon Tony, “why exactly are you dismantling our Sky Barge?”

OoooO

On a lovely Earthgardian day, a few months later, Jarvis gave Tony a heads up, “Sir, Adviser Fury has arrived, and is en route to see you.”

Heaving a heartfelt sigh, Tony worked a bit longer. He had just finished tightening up the last few connector bolts before rolling himself out from under his newest creation, only to come to an abrupt halt when Nick Fury blocked his mechanics creeper with a large booted foot.

“When are you going to retire?” Tony demanded, rolling smoothly up onto his feet, and tossing his wrench into the open tool box sitting nearby.

Cocking a brow, Fury reached over and whipped the tarp off Tony’s newest pride and joy. Watching Fury’s normal expression, being slightly peeved with Tony’s mere existence, morph through puzzled, and incredulous, before finally settling on exasperated, was something that never got old. It was these little things that made life worth living as far as Tony was concerned.

“When are you going stop building weird shit?”

“Never.”

“Well then, there’s your answer.”

“Heh.” Shrugging his shoulders, Tony couldn’t help but gaze with pride at his newest ride. “Well, what do you think? I’ve been sending components home with every empty container. Hey, Jarvis, do we have an ETA on Spangles yet?”

“Yes, Sir. Captain Rogers is due to arrive sometime in the next ten to fifteen minutes.”

“Great!”

Ignoring the increasingly impatient glare directed his way by Fury, Tony took his time unzipping his mechanics coverall. Leisurely undoing the zippers at each ankle, he finally slipped it over his sneakers. Hiding a smirk, the engineer wadded up his Stark InterGalactic emblazoned coverall, tossing the slightly grease stained, royal blue garment in the general direction of his tool box. “I promised Cap a spin around the city in my new ride,” Tony said, tugging his long sleeved under-tee into place before fondly patting the smoothing curve beside him.

“Uh huh. And does Captain Rogers know your new ride was modeled after something from the Jetsons?”

“Yep,” Tony grinned, popping his ‘p’. Closing the wrench drawer on his big rolling tool box, he opened another drawer that was full of designer sunglasses, pausing a moment to pick out, and put on, a pair with red frames. “In fact, I told him it was the spitting image of George Jetson’s car.”

Fury tilted his head a bit, examining Tony skeptically, “Uh, huh. And does Captain Rogers even have a clue as to what that means?”

“Nope. Not a one. That’s what’s going to make it fun. Look, if you want to be our Boy Elroy, you can come along, Tony offered with a grin. “But, anyone sitting in the back seat has to wear a beanie cap.” Not getting a reply he lifted an inquiring brow.

“No?”

Not that Tony had actually expected Fury to agree, even if he did actually have a beanie cap stashed in the glove box, just in case he found a taker.

“Well then, I would love to stay and talk, but I have some preflight checks to make before Stars and Stripes gets here.”

“Un huh. Well seeing as how I didn’t come all the way to New York just to shoot the breeze with Tony Stark, but rather Earth’s Emissary to Asgard, I’ll get right to the point. We need to revisit getting visas for researchers to study on Asgard.”

“Really Nick?” Tony scowled over the top of his sunglasses. “Why is this the first I’ve heard about it. Well since the last time you brought it up that is? And, not that I care, or think it is going to help, but what researchers? Which countries? What universities?”

“Well Sword at first, then--”

“Uh huh. Yeah. No.” Tony folded his arms. “I think that between Bruce and Loki you’ll do alright for now.”

“Stark, it has been made very clear to me, that the powers that be, find the present exchange of knowledge completely unacceptable. Earth will not be restricted to what tid-bit of learning your boy-toy thinks he can spin into a profit, not when there are so many other things we could be learning.”

“Well you know what? That’s currently all you’re getting. Now, if you don’t like it, you can petition to complain directly to the head cheese. I personally would pass that request on to him in a New York minute,” Tony sneered, “just so I could see him hand you your ass again. However, as Earth’s representative, I have to warn you that he is not in the best of moods right now, and he kind of actively dislikes you guys. You do realize that all the information Earth is currently receiving right now, we are getting here strictly on the down low? Yes? So there is a pretty big risk that if you force Odin to pay attention to what’s happening, he might shut it down all together. Just saying. Asgard isn’t exactly keen on distributing information to lesser realms, you know; they usually like to be on the receiving side.”

“We might be able to reduce the monetary damages we won for the Battle of New York in exchange for some help with this.”

“No, Nick, you burned that bridge when you wiped out all of the savings and investments Lo had accumulated while on earth. What is done is done. It was a dick move changing Loki for property

damage when no one else sporting Tesseract blue peepers had to pay. I hope you're all happy with the results of it."

OoooO

The ride with Steve had been everything Tony had hoped for. RCA dog look from Steve. Check. Making the evening news, by dropping directly down into a no parking zone in front of the Shake Shack on Murray Street. Check. Having a video of Captain Choir Boy himself, jumping out to pick up their cheeseburgers, going viral. Check. Pepper throwing her hands into the air and turning six shades of red when the board started badgering her for the timeline on Stark Air Cars. Check. And then there was Branson...

OoooO

Tony had been ecstatic that Doctor Foster had relocated to the eastern seaboard. Not that Tony had engineered that in any way, or at least, not totally. And it wasn't like Tony actually cared where Foster worked, except that he did care where Foster slept when she was on Earth. So the billionaire made sure that his godly brother-in-law had a whole floor in Stark Tower. Complete with a separate three bedroom guest apartment, of course. An apartment Tony had turned it over to Janie to use even when Thor was on Asgard. By giving Jane the use of a high-dollar apartment in New York City, Tony made sure that Thor landed there, rather than New Mexico. Or worse, England. So it was money well spent as far as Tony was concerned.

Every time Thor made an unscheduled trip to visit Jane Foster, Tony received a shipment. He usually only found out about it when two sour looking Einherjar escorted a conga line of laborers, and an unscheduled flotilla of large lift platforms to Starkhaus manor. Generally, laborers rolled eighteen stainless steel containers into the Manor's dressed-stone service courtyard. Each container was six feet wide and three feet deep with locking doors. Some of the containers were standing work bench height; those were double stacked. The triple stacks were desk height, and there were a few six foot tall cabinet units mixed in here and there. All of the containers were heavy-duty steel construction, three-foot-wide modules bolted back to back with each other. The resulting six foot by six foot blocks could then roll onto the Bi-Frost pad at a moment's notice.

A climate-controlled, weather-proof, secure staging area had been built right beside the Bi-Frost pad. The terrace stored containers stacked in the order Jarvis deemed most necessary to Tony in the space allotted. Happy had even built a ramp so they could be quickly rolled on and lashed together on the transporter pad.

And the best part as far as Tony was concerned? They were freaking stock components readily available at a moment's notice. Each bolted on wheel was rated for a thousand pounds and could be easily replaced with regular legs, once they were in Tony's lab. Transportation crating that doubled as lab furniture, storage cabinets, and future Earth bound shipping containers? What was not to love?

Alarms on Stark Tower's atmospheric sensors on usually gave Happy a four minute warning before a Bi-Frost touch down. So Happy had drilled the security and maintenance employees until they were like a well-oiled pit crew. With incentive bonuses for the quickest and penalties for the slowest responders, Happy even ran practice sessions, and surprise drills for the crews. Which was necessary, since Happy's crew only had five minutes max to make sure everything was loaded and secure. Otherwise Midgardian heads, or at least Stark International employee heads were going to roll. After all, interstellar transport waits for no one. Or at least, Heimdall and his Tesseract-powered transport didn't.

Every time Heimdall hit the roof of Tony's tower, he took back a full load of Tony's containers.

And a case of something alcoholic for himself. Heimdall's current favorite tipples was a vile perversion of alcohol called RumChata. At least in Tony's opinion. RumChata was a blend of five-time distilled Caribbean rums, mixed with dairy cream and flavored with cinnamon, vanilla, various spices. How the fuck the guy had even found out about the damn designer drink Tony wasn't sure. Although he suspected that HeimDude spent some time spying on trendy dance clubs. No matter how Golden-eye had discovered it, RumChata was fast becoming a fad drink among those in Heimdall's good graces.

And how exactly did Tony feel about unscheduled supply deliveries because Thor needed a booty call? Frankly, he was fucking thrilled.

The amount of stuff Tony had to move made every possible chance even more priceless than a space shuttle mission. Which was certainly worth more than a crate of trendy booze. After all, not even NASA, or Richard Branson was scheduling trips to Asgard yet. Not that Tony had resisted the temptation to gloat. To Branson that is, NASA currently wasn't talking to him.

"Hellllooo Doctor Yes, how's it hanging?" he caroled.

Pen in hand, Tony continued to mindlessly sign the big stack of documents in front of him, "Tony Stark here."

"Now what, Stark?"

"What? Can't I just call up to shoot the breeze with an old friend?"

"Of course you can, Stark, but since I'm not Potts or that General you hang around with, I'm not one of your friends. You only call here when you want to harass me."

"I'm hurt, really hurt. I just wanted to know if you got that selfie of me in Asgard that I sent you a couple of months ago?"

Branson gave an evil little chuckle into the phone. "Yes I did," he replied, before continuing with mocking tones of congratulations. "It must have been enormously exciting for you. You are the first person on Earth to hook up with a crazy alien prince, and sleep your way to another planet."

"Yeah, well, what can I say? I am just that kind of good in the sack. And I've always had a weakness for the bad boys," Tony replied with a small chuckle of his own. "Oh, and I'm lucky too, you have seen the guy, yes? He's not only smart and gorgeous, but also a god, and occasionally the most glamorous hot babe you have ever laid eyes on." Tony's voice was gleeful because he *was* lucky and they both knew it.

"And the crazy alien general bit?"

"Pfftttt... You know that's been debunked. But enough about my sexual prowess, good luck and stunningly beautiful partner. I just wanted to congratulate you; I saw you might actually be getting your certifications next year. So, yay you. And all that."

Tony was fucking with Branson, who knew that Tony was fucking with him. But, you had to give the old guy credit. He didn't get pissed that Tony was teasing him about topping something he'd been working on for decades. Oh, and on occasion, a god, too.

"Of course we're thrilled. Are you finally going to sign up for a ride?"

"Well, reservation openings might be kind of tight there for a bit, but I did hear you upped your passenger capacity to ten. Good for you. Next time me, Loki, and his twelve guards make the trip

down, we'll have to run over your way to check it out. He's a big fan of antique modes of transportation, you know."

Tony could hear Branson's disbelieving head shake in his tone. "Fuck off, Stark."

"Oooo. What a temptation... But, I think I'm good. But hey, thanks for offering. Oh, did I tell you I just sent another thirteen tons of stuff up to Space Viking Land? I'm sure I'll get everything I want up there eventually. Although I haven't decided if I'm taking any of the cars yet." Tony grinned into the phone, sure that Branson could hear it in his voice. "Did you know that's three-fifths of the cargo payload that NASA can do on an outbound trip? And we'll do the same at the end of the week when I go back up there. What was your payload again?"

"Fucker," Branson swore, trying not to laugh. Still busily signing documents, Tony had no such compunction.

"Ha! You know I am, Richard, it's what got me into space."

"Stark, did you just call me to yank my chain?" Branson demanded, still trying not to laugh, but more than ready to cut to the chase. While he may have enjoyed an occasional sparring match with Tony, he was generally a busy guy.

"Believe it or not, I did not just call you up to mess with you." Tony protested in his most sincere voice. The one he usually reserves for senate hearings and screwing with his one eyed nemeses.

"I don't believe it."

"Well, I can't say I blame you, because I can barely believe it myself, but in this case it's true."

"I'm a busy man Tony, and I am not getting any younger. Why did you call if it wasn't to piss with me?"

"Well, the thing is, now that the contractors have all left, I'm throwing a housewarming party fairly soon for my gorgeous god. Do you know Jane Foster? Thor's nerd? Well, the two of us can only take being surrounded a large group of Asgardians for a limited amount of time. So I thought I'd invite a few of my favorite Earthlings to the party, just to give us someone normal to talk to. Do you think you and a plus one might want to attend?"

"You're inviting them to New York? California? Where exactly?" Not that Tony thought that Branson would necessarily turn down an invite to one of his parties. But more likely trying to get an idea of where he might be heading in case he could set up something else in the states during his trip.

"Oh fuck no. Lo is still semi grounded. This will be at Starkhús. Not too much of a house, really. Certainly, not my tower. But it is only minutes away from Odin's palace, so the neighborhood is nice." Well, nice for Asgard anyhow, Tony thought, starting to sign another one of the seemingly unending documents awaiting his signature.

Despite Branson trying to be cool about it, Tony could hear the excitement bubbling up in the older man's voice. "Asgard? You're inviting me to *Asgard*?"

"Well, yeah. It's either that or I have to have the house torn down and rebuilt here. And let me tell you, it would not go over well with the Queen Mum if I tried to permanently move her baby boy to NYC. And don't worry; I'm not sneaking you in or anything. I will have permission for all my guests from the Lord of All Creation himself. It's amazing what he will agree too, if I manage to broker a little inner family peace."

After signing a few more documents, and hoping the old guy on the other end of the line hadn't died on him, Tony finally asked, "So... Richard... You up for a visit to another galaxy?"

*Perma Link for Commissioned Art - <https://rennemichaels.tumblr.com/post/169270165073/stark-intergalactic-chapter-14-has-posted-tony> by Batwynn

Chapter End Notes

Start the new year off right by commenting on all the fic you read. I understand from Tumblr that 2018 has been declared the Year of the Comment. (Panic not, just writing 'Extra Kudos' totally counts as a comment.)

**** Trigger Warnings **** None whatsoever.

Chapter 15 – Lab

Chapter Summary

Loki stretches his creative talents... all of them. Some of them leave Tony unimpressed.

Chapter Notes

My final holiday gift to you wonderful readers. Happy Serbian Christmas.... the tree comes down tomorrow. :D

Beta'd by the marvelous team of [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , and then screwed up by me. leSigh.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 15 – Lab

Tony loved Pepper. He really did. But the woman was some sort of vampire, except that instead of blood, she had a never ending craving for signatures and project approvals. Would that he could ward her off with a cross instead of a gallon of scrawled ink.

“Jarvis, let LoKitty know I’m home, make sure Marji knows there are perishables packed in with my coffee, and let me know the minute you have your files synced.”

“Of course Sir. If I might suggest, now would be a good time for a nice nap?”

Tony grimaced at his AI’s nearest camera. “Very funny. I have a boat load of stuff I need to work on. So fire up--”

“Sir, since Prince Loki has the lab levels on lock down, if a nap doesn’t appeal to you, perhaps you would enjoy a nice relaxing a bath, and then maybe a movie?”

Tony’s forward progress ground to a halt and he folded his arms and frowned at Jarvis’ camera.

“Jay? What the fuck is going on here? Why is *MY* lab on lock down with me on the *outside* of it? And what in the hell does any of this have to do with me taking a bath? Which, I have to tell you, will never be relaxing enough when anyone, let alone tall, dark, and devious has me locked out of my own fucking lab.”

“I understand, Sir, and I am sorry, Sir, but there isn’t any way to get around Prince Loki’s lock down.”

Ignoring his faithful, but now annoying AI, Tony strode toward the lab entrance at the back of the house, his hands now twitching loosely at his sides. And, not inconsequentially, picking up a full load of steam, every step more emphatically placed than the last.

“In fairness, I do believe Prince Loki had intended to be finished before you were scheduled to

arrive back home tomorrow afternoon,” Jarvis offered apologetically. “You are early.”

"Oh, so finishing before I arrive is supposed to make this all okay?" Tony griped, shucking his worn, brown leather jacket, and irritably tossing it on a small side table he was passing. "Or should I apologize profusely for arriving at an inconvenient time without checking to see if his Highness was finished screwing around with my equipment."

Okay, so that bit of snark possibly could have been worded better.

There were things Tony knew one might possibly find when they arrived home almost a full day before they were expected. Strangers in your bed, for instance; strangers in your bed **with your spouse** if you were unlucky; kids throwing a loud party; or even finding a strange mud-pack wearing creature in a ratty bathrobe, sitting on the couch pigging out on Ben & Jerry's while watching Marty Povich. But even that last one did not come close to the horror of being locked out of your own workspace while the spouse changed the settings on your equipment, touched your tools, or whatever the hell else could happen when the sanctity of a man's private lab was violated.

"I'm sorry, Sir, but---" Having had enough, Tony snapped before his AI could finish.

"Great, wonderful. But I'm here now, and I want into my lab. Door. Open."

"Unfortunately, I can't do that, Sir." Jarvis said thickly laying his special brand of British accented soothing on with a trowel. "As I said, the lab is on total lock down. Might I suggest that if a bath is totally out of the question, that you find something else to do until he finishes? I do still have those Border Gateway Protocols to be refined. We don't want a repeat of the problems that occurred on Earth."

Tony turned a jaundiced eye at the nearest camera. "For one thing, I doubt very much that Asgard has the population to put out as much traffic as Earth does. For another thing, none of that really matters, right now, because why? Because I want in my god damn lab. Override 'Seriously, don't touch my stuff,' execute now," Tony huffed.

"I am sorry, Sir," Jarvis said, although there was a note in his voice that was anything but, "however, that override currently does not work, as I am not the one controlling the lock down." So yeah Jarvis was no doubt hoping that this latest outrage would result in a showdown between Tony and Janis.

"Janis," Tony whined, "did I or did I not ask you to play nice with Jarvis?" As per usual, there was no reply beyond a small chime to indicate that the AI acknowledged your speech. While Janis would speak to people or send messages as needed to accomplish the tasks she undertook for Loki, she would not reply back and forth unless specifically ordered by the temperamental godling she was assigned to assist.

"Can you at least see what he's doing?" Tony snapped.

"That I am able to do."

"Well, thank the maker for that at least." Tony grouched, pulling out his phone. "Okay, show it to me."

"About that. There may be a prob--"

"Oh? For crying out loud! Now what?" Tony waved his hands in annoyance, perilously close to stomping his feet like an enraged toddler.

“Prince Loki has invoked the secrecy portion of the wergild agreement you made with as part of his agreement of you relocating to Asgard.”

Wait a minute... Tony’s eyes narrowed as he recalled the arrangement they’d finally hammered out.

After some fairly contentious back and forth-ing.

OoooO

“Hey, not a problem.” Tony had instantly replied, “I can set you up with the same access and override rights that Pepper has.”

The god had turned slowly in his station chair, regarding Tony with narrowed eyes. “And yet again I must point out that you don’t listen. Pepper’s level of Override Rights is acceptable, but the second part was something Pepper doesn’t have, I want complete and total file access. Complete. Total. No exceptions.”

And yeah, Tony’s immediate reaction had been hastily tamped down anger. He’d been prepared to give Loki anything he wanted, but just who the fuck could have imagined Loki would demand something like this from him? And why? Okay fine, Loki was a Prince of Asgard and heir apparent of the deceased King of Jotunheim. And granted, he had a Machiavellian need to know coupled with entitlement issues.

Got that, thanks.

*But it wasn’t like **Tony** gave a flying fuck about all that. Hell, he was a Merchant Prince of Midgard, born the son of a Merchant Prince. And, if you really wanted to get pissy about it, according to some genealogy work his grandmother had commissioned. Which was totally dodgy in Tony’s private opinion, but still. The Starks were ‘apparently’ descended several times removed from Ferdinando the First of Tuscany, one of the ‘original’ Merchant Princes. The scheming bastards will guy who gave the term its name for crying out loud.*

Big frickin’ whoop.

It wasn’t like crap like that meant anything to anyone on Earth these days. But then again, neither did Loki’s claims to fucking fame.

“Okay... this could be a problem.”

“You asked what it would take to get me to forgive you; this is what it will take.”

Tony could feel himself tensing up. Who in their right mind would think he would ever give anyone full access to Jarvis? Well beside Loki apparently, who arguably was not in his right mind.

“Look. Lo. Those file are my entire life’s work. Hell, they’re also a record of everything else in my entire life. And honestly, I can’t see that happening in this life time or the next.”

Eyes flashing, Loki had almost spat at him, “Why not, Stark?”

Really? What kind of fucked up question was that? Ignoring Tony’s incredulous huff, the Trickster went through one of those fucked up mood swings he was pretty much famous for. Pursing his lips, he stared at Tony, bright green eyes half hidden behind a sweep of dark lashes as a tiny smile blossomed across those lips that Tony just couldn’t get enough of.

“Why Stark? Would it bother you for someone else to have access to the most important part of your being?” Loki cooed. Deep undertones of mocking laced every word.

“You’re damn straight it would,” Tony snapped before pinching the bridge of his nose. Tony could feel the pain of a migraine lurking somewhere just outside of sight, just lurking there in the dark, waiting for just the right moment to pimp-slap the shit out of the engineer.

*“Look, I get that I pissed you off. I got it. Understood. But this is way too much to ask because of one slip up. A big slip. Huge even, **but still.**”*

“There is no ‘but still.’ I fail to see what the problem is,” Loki shot back, his voice flat and hard. “I only want access to something that you control. It isn’t like I am trying to deny you use of it. Unlike what you did.” Loki tightened his lips as his head made an aborted jerking motion like he was going to spin back towards the window, but caught himself; instead he hardened his glare at the engineer. “After all you didn’t even spare a second thought to taking something that I controlled. Despite the fact that you were already in possession of my strength, half of what made me who I was, you decided to take the rest, what tiny shreds of magic Odin allowed me, leaving me helpless and defenseless.” Taking a seemingly deep settling breath, and affecting an air of reasonableness, Loki leaned back and smiled at him. “I don’t want to take anything away from you, I just want access, that will not in any way exclude you from the same information. Does that not seem fair to you?”

And the bitch of it was that it did. Sort of, anyhow. In the end, they compromised. Loki would get thirteen hours and nine minutes, which is how long Tony had kept him from his magic. Tony's files, would never, for security reasons, leave Asgard. Second, for the future Loki would have Pepper-grade override rights with Jarvis. And third, he would have a reasonable, but not restricted one time sum of money to purchase something. Additionally, Jarvis would provide assistance with all three wergild payment items, and would not share that information with Tony in any way.

That had been the deal required to broker peace with tall, hot, and crazy.

Sooo.... Tony recalled himself to the here and now, glaring at the locked steel door leading to the lab level.

“So, Jarvis. Not that you can get into specifics, but is it a wergild purchase matter or a file matter keeping me locked out of my own lab?”

“I do apologize Sir, but I am not at liberty to say which due to the nature of your agreement.”

Bingo! He knew Jarvis wouldn’t let him down!

OoooO

It was inevitable that Tony would interrupt him when he was at the most crucial part of creation. He’d been working non-stop since Tony left two days ago, and had hoped to be finished long before his wretched mortal returned. In fairness to Tony, it was Janis who had initially interrupted with the news that Tony wanted in... and then that Tony was trying to override her systems, and then that Tony was throwing a fit out in the hallway since he was using coding and Janis had an inflow filter that was more magic than programing. But still, it *was* Tony causing the interruptions.

Using his sleeve to wipe the sweat from his forehead before it could trickle down into his eyes, Loki blinked tiredly, trying to focus. There was no disputing that Tony was a programing genius. However, his knowledge of arcane traps and Seiðr-enhanced loops was a bit lacking. A wide grin

stole across his face despite the delicate tuning he was doing to the downstream magnets of an Asgardian version of a particle accelerator.

Perhaps two hours later, while Loki was delicately attaching interfaces to his pre-machined containment cases, Janis spoke again in aggrieved tones. “My Prince, your consort is becoming most upset. The things he wants me to pass on to you are being couched in progressively cruder speech.”

After slotting a retaining ring into place on the last of seven small reactors in front of him, Loki pinched the bridge of his nose briefly before sliding his hand up to rub the center of his forehead. Tony had a positive gift for disrupting his best laid plans. But he needed only to test the connectors, seal the containers shut with impact-proof glass, add opal slices on top of the glass as camouflage and he would be finished.

Perhaps another hour for Tony to work himself up further? Nothing to look forward to for sure. Perhaps it was time for a little something special, to cap off their recent reconciliation?

“So long as he doesn’t do himself an injury, continue to ignore his requests. We might as well complete these. I doubt very much if we’ll get another chance.” Shaking the tension out of his shoulders, Loki bent back over his task.

“Very true, Milord. While it is a different configuration and of course much smaller, your equipment did leave residuals that he will be able to be detect, despite the extra shielding you used. Jarl Stark’s sensors are very efficient, and will no doubt point to the use of an eldsneytisgjöf ögn even if you remove it.”

“True. Which is why I am going to leave it here as an apology for violating the sanctity of his lab.” Mischievous green eyes glanced up a moment, and a wide smirk blossoming across Loki’s wan face before he returned his attention to the row of miniature arc reactors. “I think for irritating him by closing the back door he thought he’d grafted onto your code, we might need something different. Call Marji. I have something I want her to get ready for me.”

OoooO

In the main hall of Starksted, there was a fifteen foot tall, ornately carved clock made of dark burl walnut. Just a little something that Tony’s mother had found on one of her many trips to Europe. And then, insisted on hauling home, much to Howard’s disgust. That Howard had hated the damn fiddly thing, was of course what had originally attracted young Tony to it. As a child, he had been fascinated by the carvings, going so far as to make up stories about what the nine carved figures talked about at night after everyone had gone to bed. When Tony was older he’d ferreted out the sly allegories behind the minor carvings. And as an adult, Tony had stubbornly refused to let anyone repair it. He had to admit, if only to himself, that maintaining the clock had taught him quite a lot about what it took to craft delicate mechanisms that could last hundreds of years.

For the past fifteen years, the enormous clock had been relegated to the penthouse’s library, along with the other bits and pieces of Maria’s that Tony couldn’t make himself let go. Tony guessed it made sense that if he’d been unable to bear not having it with him when he’d moved into Stark Tower; he certainly couldn’t leave it behind when he relocated to Asgard. Moving it across realms was a bit more difficult than it had been getting it to Stark Tower. Like mother-big-crate, anti-shock-pads-out-the-wazzoo difficult. Additionally, Tony had to play nice with several elfish artificers, who were hired to check the cabinet for damages, as well as do a little preventative maintenance. After all, Tony didn’t do wood. He did, however, train several of the staff on how to work the weights and manually reset it every morning.

Which was why, despite the differences between Asgardian and Earth hours, the clock pealed forth, letting the household know that, as far as their Midgardian boss was concerned, it was six-fifteen when Loki barreled out of Tony's lab, almost tripping over him.

Yes, Tony could have gone somewhere else to wait. No one told him he had to sit on the floor, leaning against the door, irritably reading, and tapping out proposal denials on his tablet. Okay, and approving a few of them too, but only the really, really good ones that he couldn't justify shooting down no matter how pissy a mood he was in. This however, was not the mood his lab-thieving spouse was in as they untangled from each, Tony swatting godly hands in annoyance, as his partner literally picked him up off the floor.

Loki looked happier than a kid with two ice cream cones. And despite Tony's firm intentions to 'chat' with him about the sanctity of a man's lab, there was something incredibly off-putting about being pulled into a full body hug while the loon holding you laughed delightedly. Not evilly, or sarcastically, but honest-to-Edison delightedly. A sound Tony had heard far too seldom from his god. Of course, being spun in a circle, and jacked up against the wall while Loki interspersed teasing kisses along the side of his neck, with whispers of absolutely filthy suggestions was also a little distracting. Okay, a lot distracting. And increasingly arousing, which took distraction techniques to a whole 'nother level. Not that that Tony's flesh wasn't willing, or that he minded Loki warm breath caressing his ear, whispering how much he missed his clever mortal's fingers, wanton ways... and most of all the sight of Tony on his knees servicing his god.

Okay, then. Tony could be on board with pretty much all of those items.

After all, while it had been over two months since Tony'd been finally forgiven, forgiven by his Psychotic Little Bundle of Divinity, things still weren't as unrestrained as they had been. And so, yeah, Tony is more than a little interested in making every one of Mister Mistoffelees' suggestions come to life.

A soft tug on his hair pulled Tony's head back and recalled his attention to the conversation at hand. "I will not apologize. I had intended to be finished before you returned." Bright green eyes crinkled in amusement, before they almost unwillingly focused on Tony's mouth. Touching his own upper lip with the tip of his tongue, Loki breathed in deeply before sighing out his name. "Tony. You can of course do what you want; checking to be sure your beloved lab is safe..." Soft kisses caressed Tony's lips, avoiding any of Tony's attempts to deepen the kiss. "Or you can join me," Loki whispered, before flicking out his tongue to trace lightly around the shell of Tony's ear. "Marji has placed a few bottles of Ice Wine and a tray of finger foods in the tub room, to enjoy while... soaking." Loki gently suckled the lobe of Tony's ear a moment before continuing, "Could I persuade to join me? Or would you rather go check your lab, while you watch from afar?"

A small noise, almost a whine seemed to form in the back of Tony's throat as he leaned into Loki's embrace. "I'll check the lab and then join you?" While Tony had meant it to be a statement, somehow it had come out as a question. For some reason being forceful with his Trickster was easier when it was a Naughty Hair Brush Night.

"Sadly, no. I know how your clever mind gets distracted once you are in your lab." Something hard pressed against Tony's hip as his god rubbed against him. "And, I need relief now. Should you decide not to join me immediately, I *will* lock the door until I am finished."

There were seemingly more hands than Loki possessed roaming all over Tony. Long fingers plucking his dress shirt from his slacks and snaking up his back, slipping past the waistband of his pants to dip down as far as they could with them still buttoned, before pulling out and skimming down his ass cheeks and pulling him into a tight embrace that pinned his own arms to his sides

even as he was lifted almost on tip toes against the grinding, nuzzling god.

“All rright, all rright. Quit that! My neck isn’t a chew toy. Let’s go.”

Chuckling, Loki set him back down, snagged a wrist and started towing Tony towards the main hall. “I am so getting you a teething ring,” he muttered, rubbing his other hand against what he was sure was a blooming bruise. “Jarvis, lab, snapshot, panoramic!”

OoooO

There were few things better than drinking chilled Ice Wine while soaking in a tub of very hot water. Things like licking said wine off Loki’s toned chest and abdomen while he stretched his fine, lean body on the broad edge of the pool being one of them. Or listening to his Trickster squeal as he sneakily poured more ice-cold wine in a trail from Loki’s perky nipples, all the way to his happy place, so Tony could lick it off again. He was particularly proud of that move, having achieved the element of surprise by waiting until his god had squeezed his eyes shut chasing a sensation. He also enjoyed being nestled with his back against Loki’s front, while Loki plucked fruit bits and savories off a nearby tray and hand fed them to him. This also was an excellent position to be in when they were done eating, as Loki whispered absolutely filthy fantasies in his ear while rubbing wildly foaming bath oil positively everywhere. Tony had returned the favor, using the slippery residue and the buoyancy of the tub to rock himself against the hard length riding between his cheeks... causing story time to be interrupted more than a few times by his god moaning like a porn star.

A couple of hours later, having drank all the wine, and both of them having come from blowjobs and mutually intense stroking, Tony poured his reduced to a puddle of goo partner into bed. His god was still sound asleep a few hours later when a still slightly muzzy, very sated and squeaky clean Tony slipped out of bed and down to his lab.

OoooO

Tony spent over an hour, asking carefully oblique questions, his blood pressure ratcheting up every time he actually scored a question that Jarvis had to flat out refuse to answer in order to maintain the secrecy agreement allowed by Loki’s Wergild. Not that he hadn’t suspected the truth when he looked over the lab’s snapshot of sensors, and figured out what the machine, bolted to one of his permanently fixed work tables was supposed to do. A machine that seemed far too small for its purpose. Something that added to his growing aggravation until he firmly told himself to just consider it Space Viking Tech and move on. At any rate, it was just under two hours of investigation before Tony definitively knew what Lo had been creating in his lab. To put it mildly, Tony was not happy.

“Is the *Prince* still sleeping, Jay?”

OoooO

“You made an Arc Reactor!”

Blearily, Loki lifted his face from the pillow he’d been buried in, and pushed curling tangles of hair out of his eyes. “Huh?”

“You. Made. An Arc Reactor!”

Loki rolled to his side, squinting up at Tony, and again pushed unruly dark curls from his face. Or rather he tried to, his hair having more than a mind of its own. “What *are* you going on about?”

“Don’t *huh*, and *what* me. You made an Arc Reactor.”

“No--”

“Yes!” Tony practically howled clutching his hair with an air of only barely repressed violence, “Yes! Yes, you did! Tony only just stopped himself flinging his arms out, fingers clenching as he restrained himself from wrapping them around Loki’s delectable, yet annoying throat. “What the fuck Lo! Did we or did we not agree that you were the magic user and I was the engineer? And why did we agree on that? Because it’s dangerous when I meddle with magic because I don’t know what the hell I’m doing. But you know it works the other way too.”

Now awake and annoyed at being yelled at, Loki slid to the edge of the bed and sat there scowling through his wayward curls. Something Tony normally would have found vastly endearing, with a big slice of amused, because come on, who looks more fucking adorable than sleep tousled trickster pouting like a thwarted three year old? No one, right? However, the **terror** wrapping itself around his heart like strands of barbwire... And, said barbwire getting tighter every time his imagination supplied him with flashes of what could have easily happened in the lab, kind of detracted from the moment.

“I did work with you in your lab.” Loki growled, his low, sleep roughen voice, not really making it any easier for Tony. “I *was* classified as an engineer on Midgard if you’ll remember.”

“Yeah?” Dropping his hands to his side, Tony made one of his patented, I-am-so-not-impressed faces. “I am also an Earthgardian engineer, and despite that, my first post-Afghanistan arc reactor was made in Malibu. Why you might ask? It certainly wasn’t because that lab was better,” and it really wasn’t. All of Tony’s labs were pure candy land, he made sure of that. “I made it in Malibu because there were less people that would be killed if the damn thing blew up the entire fucking building!” Throwing up his outstretched hands, to wave frantically on either side of his head like some demented Devo dance move, Tony couldn’t keep his voice from picking up volume and punch, “Unlike, this place, where you could have taken the whole damn house, and who knows how many of our minions with you.”

Loki looked vastly unimpressed. “I followed your notes meticulously Tony.”

Arrrrgghhh! Tony’s fists slapped down on his thighs, the muscles in his throat straining as he looked for patience somewhere in the vicinity of the finely plastered decorative ceiling. It was a long moment before he could trust himself to speak without screaming. “Not to bust your bubble or anything , but this is not potions class, Snape.” He ground out at long last, shoving his hands deep into his pockets to hide how hard he was clenching them. “And besides, it’s not like you even have any crib sheets from the Half Blood Prince. All you had was my blueprints, and concept write up, not even a step-by-step procedure. Procedures that would have noted several things to avoid so you wouldn’t almost kill yourself like I did.”

“They can’t be that dangerous, you make them all the time. And I saw no such warning in the notes, nor have you ever mentioned any.”

Tony pulled his agitated hands out of his pockets and ran them through his hair, “Well, I wouldn’t would I? I mean after all it was not exactly my finest hour. ‘I’ do not make them all the time, Oh sure, the big ones. But there’s a lot more room for error on those guys. And, there’s tons more separation between the sections that have a tendency to go boom if they interact. The point is, I’ve learned through trial and error how not to kill myself while I’m doing it. None of which is in the notes just in case somebody finds them.” Stepping forward with a Huff, Tony draped his arms across loosely Loki’s shoulders and bent over to touch their foreheads together, his tone now almost pleading. “Lo, you could have killed yourself. Hell, you could’ve blown up the whole damn

house, and maybe part of the neighborhood too.” Pulling back a bit, almost dancing in place due to frustration Tony gave him a despairing look. “Could you please, just fucking once, confide in me?”

“You’d have said no.”

“You could have convinced me. You’re good at that. Or, you could have just reminded me that we had to deal.”

Suddenly, Tony didn’t have the energy to stand for one moment more, sinking down, his hands slid bonelessly down Loki’s chest, coming to rest between his god’s knees, head bowed, Tony took a shaky breath as his own past recklessness behavior came home to roost, in a cloud so black, he felt like he could be in the money shot of an Alfred Hitchcock movie. *How* had Pepper put up with him all those years? Leaning forward until his head rested on Loki’s chest, he bit his lip. If it wasn’t for the fact that Stark men didn’t cry... well, not when they had witnesses at any rate, Tony would have been making with the tear tracks.

Feeling every one of his years weighing upon him, he also felt a hand gently smoothing his hair. Tentatively at first, but then as he relaxed into his god’s hold, it became more confident, seemingly reassured that despite their disagreement, the offered comfort would not be rejected.

“Oh god--” Tony pressed against Loki, pulling him tight, muffling his voice, the hands that had been in his hair, were now loosely wrapped around his shoulders. “Bambi, you can’t do this to me. What if something had happened? I couldn’t live with myself if you got killed because of something I invented. I’m begging you. Let me in.”

Silently, they stayed like this for long enough that a small part of him, his knees actually, was thankful for the thick fur rugs providing warmth and cushioning from the hard stone floor on either side of their bed. Tony looked up. Fortunately his face was not tear streaked, even if his lashes were suspiciously damp.

The long fingers that had been absently rubbing circles on his back stilled. “Loki. Look at me,” Tony demanded, recalling his god from sightlessly staring out the terrace. Locking his gaze, Tony said, “I think by now it’s pretty much a given that one way or the other, you can get whatever you want from me.” Loki raised a brow, but didn’t depute Tony’s acknowledgment that he was good and truly whipped. “Look, I just have to know that you’re safe. I have to check the damn thing to make sure there aren’t any flaws that could cause it to explode.” Which Tony was determined to do, no matter what several days of testing were going to do to his schedule.

“Yes. All right.” Heaving a heavy sigh, Loki pushed Tony back a bit, opening up some space between them. Then he twisted his hands until he held a miniature Arc Reactor, offering it to Tony. “I did not make an Arc Reactor.”

The device he was handed certainly looked like an Arc Reactor. One that was about twice the size of the pendant reactor Tony had made for Loki, call it two inches, perhaps a bit more. And didn’t Tony’s heart nearly leap out of his chest when he saw it. While not quite as dangerous to make as the still smaller, pendant sized one, he’d given Loki, this size was still far more difficult to manufacture than, say, the ones that powered his suits. And even that size had almost gotten away from him several times.

Frowning, he noticed Loki doing the Magic Hand thing again and was appalled when the god started plucking them out of his magic pocket, in what seemed, at least to Tony, to be a never ending stream.

They ended up with an amazing six more of them lined along the edge of the bed.

Cocking an eyebrow, Tony couldn't help but shoot his god a bemused look. "Over achieve much, Rudolf?"

Chapter End Notes

Don't forget, Tumblr has declared this the year of the comment. (Panic not, just writing 'Extra Kudos' totally counts as a comment.)

**** Trigger Warnings **** None whatsoever.

Chapter 16 - Jotunheim Minerals

Chapter Summary

It can be a little tense, visiting unknown relatives. But hey, gifts of all sorts are kinda nice.

Chapter Notes

Beta'd by the marvelous team of [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) , and Mima Mia... This being another chapter who has been waiting to be posted for like years.

I am happy to report that the tree, skirt, ornaments, garland and extra lights have all shifted around so they fit in ONE easily transportable, and storable container. Yay me!

Also... I have an approximate word count on this damn thing... I figure it will come in between 75-80K

The Tiniest of Trigger Warnings in the End Notes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 16 - Jotunheim Minerals

Leaning forward with a scowl chiseled deep on his face, Býleistr's voice ground out, "Why are you here **'Brother'**? Have you run out of places within the Nine Realms to hide and thus have come at last to try and claim your birthright?"

Loki casually waved his hand to dismiss the words floating down from the icy throne and added an elaborate eye roll for emphasis. "I don't want your wretched realm. But my partner does." Býleistr started, scowling down at the strangely stoic guards on the dais and those flanking Loki.

This occasioned another airy hand wave, of the *'calm down it's not what you think'* type. "Or rather, I should say, he wants access to its products and people." Extending his arms, Loki mockingly bowed. "Therefore, however much I may dislike doing so, I am here to make a deal with you."

"What have you done to my guards," the Jotun king demanded angrily.

"And why should I even entertain such a discussion, let alone any kind of an agreement with **you**?" There was not any way more loathing could be packed into that one sentence. The implication being, of course, that as a genocide-attempting, patricidal, fratricidal double-crosser, Loki should be put down at once, rather than be allowed to pollute the air of Jotunheim's throne room.

Býleistr's eyes narrowed, which Loki totally understood, and were the boot were on the other foot, he would be in total agreement with such sentiment. Unfortunately, the boot was not on the other foot, and Tony had needs that had to be met if he was to stay happy in Asgard. And forgive Loki's

various trespasses upon his last nerve.

“You will entertain it because if you do not, then Jotunheim might very soon have a new king,” Loki told him calmly. “You will entertain it because, despite my past misdeeds, it is in the best interests of you and your people...” Loki’s arms again spread wide in a mocking benediction. “But perhaps most importantly you will entertain this discussion and come to an agreement with me, because I will it.”

Býleistr rose involuntarily at the more than implied threat. While not the largest of Jotuns, he towered over the green-clad god. Easily two heads taller than Loki and standing at the top of a dais several steps tall, and still he could not manage to intimidate the much smaller claimant to the throne.

Loki tossed him a mocking half grin, and clasping his hands behind his back, he began to slowly pace back and forth before the throne, watching the Jotun king out of the corner of his eye. After a few turns, he stopped, tilting his head up as if to read some important message on the cracked stone and ice ceiling. After a long moment, Loki’s glittering green eyes slid down and caught Býleistr’s ruby red ones. The wide tight lipped smile, the one Tony called his ‘Devious Bat-Shit Crazy Bastard’ smile, was exactly the same one he had once offered Laufey.

Eyes widening in alarm Býleistr raised his head to call out for his additional guards.

“Please don’t,” Loki said quietly, pausing to brush a few errant snowflakes off the sleeve of his jacket, before returning his attention to the King of Jotunheim.

Býleistr paused, tilting his own head in a weirdly similar fashion as he studied his older, long lost brother.

“I have no desire to harm you, or your people unless you force my hand.”

Býleistr did not look the least bit reassured by Loki’s declaration.

“Therefore, I advise you to think carefully before you do anything... rash. Otherwise I will have to look into having someone on the throne of Jotunheim who is more amenable to the needs of my house. If you force me to over throw you...”

“The Jotnar would not listen to one such as you!” Býleistr growled. “I am the king of Jotunheim now.”

Loki ignored the crackle of ice underneath his feet as it tried, unsuccessfully, to impale him. He had heard about that trick, and had come prepared.

“And I apparently, am the crown prince of Jotunheim, and your elder. The head of my house is a hero of Midgard, has an industrial complex behind him, and was once nicknamed the Merchant of Death. My foster brother is the wielder of Mjöltnir, and heir to the throne of Asgard. My *foster father*, its king, and the Bane of the Nine Realms. I was taken for a reason, you know; the assimilation of the Jotun population was once Odin’s dearest wish. And if none of that is enough, I am one of the most powerful mages in the Nine Realms, and you have no way of keeping me out of Jotunheim, or indeed, even detecting when I arrive, since I don’t need the Bi-Frost to get here.” He smiled beatifically up at his erstwhile brother. “Now. Let’s take a moment to consider all of these facts, and then consider an agreement that benefits us both.”

Shaking his head, Loki waved a careless hand and the razor sharp ice shards that had grown up outside of his protected area flowed into an ornate chair behind him. While it was not technically a

throne, there was definitely more than a hint of majesty in its construction.

“I have been told that I have a small tendency to overreact when pushed to the wall,” Loki continued calmly, sprawling comfortably to one side in his chair, and completely ignoring any threat that Býleistr might pardonably be considering. “That trait, coupled with my natural desire for permanent solutions, means...” Loki smiled sweetly up at his younger brother. “That sometimes my desire to fix a problem has not always worked out well for others. Quite unintentional, I assure you.”

He smirked. “Usually.”

Horried expressions did not normally find themselves at home on Jotun faces, accustomed as they were to being regarded as the source of such expressions on the other races of the Nine Realms. But there was no way that the look Býleistr was giving Loki could be described as anything else.

“You’re insane.”

Loki appeared to give this idea serious consideration before brightly replying, “Well... Yes.” The smaller god’s tone clearly indicated that this was something that obviously everyone should already be aware of. “But, I *am* in therapy.”

The mage’s sunny smile did not seem comfort his estranged, younger brother in the least. “And moderately agreeable unless provoked.” Loki told him. “I think that is the important bit that needs to be remembered.”

Crossing his stretched out booted ankles in front of him, Loki placed an elbow on the arm of his... throne, resting his head comfortably on the tips of his fingers while his other hand lightly brushed the thick be-jeweled belt he now always wore. “Now... Do you want to hear what I propose?”

OoooO

Loki waved his hands and a box weighing at least a ton materialized in Tony’s workshop. Tony yelped.

“What are you doing! You just can’t dump stuff in my workshop!”

Loki sighed.

Confusion was evident on Tony’s face as he pawed open several of the strange woven bags. “Wait a minute... what is this stuff?” Each bag was full of a different metal or mineral. Looking not unlike a mischievously wicked child, who had nevertheless had a generous visit from Santa, Tony looked up at his partner in delighted awe. “Jotunheim?”

Examining his fingernails, as if to make sure they had not been marred, Loki smirked.

“How? Smugglers?”

“Is that important, Tony? You tell me what you need and where you need it. I’ll make the arrangements.”

Sufficiently distracted from the ‘*how*’, by the alluring promise of ‘*more*’, Tony returned to excitedly digging out and opening up other sacks in the large box. How lucky was he? First Marji finding that over looked stash of coffee, and dried blueberries buried in the pantry this morning. That discovery, saving him from the horror of having to drink his emergency canned espresso shots, at least until his next visit Earth-side. And now, Christmas came early. It was like the

planets, or realms actually, were aligning just for him.

Chuckling, Loki came around the edge of the crate and turned Tony's face towards him, giving him a chaste kiss. "Enjoy your rocks, Tony. I'm going to take a hot bath, check today's work progress, and then I'll be back to see if there is anything in there that suits your needs or strikes your fancy."

"Uh-huh." Tony said absently, never taking his eyes off the box, almost not noticing that Loki was leaving until the lab door shut behind him.

"Whoa. Wait. Jarvis, did Loki say he was going back to his job site?"

"No sir. He intends to take a bath right at the present time."

Lifting his head like a lion catching a promising scent, Tony purred, "Is he?" Torn, he glanced from the door to the sacks and back to the door again.

"Might I point out, Sir, that the new material samples will be right here two hours from now? However, Prince Loki will not."

Thoughtfully, Tony twisted the bag he was holding shut again. "Excellent point, as always, Jarvis," he complimented the AI.

"Keep an eye on this stuff for me, will ya?" Tony tossed the bag on his work bench before hurrying out the door to catch up with his god.

OoooO

It took several long days for Tony to work his way down through the contents of the Jotun minerals. Frowning in concentration, he tapped the clear box protecting the sample from outside contaminants as if that simple tap would somehow change the readings on his screen.

It didn't of course.

"Holy Fucknuts," Tony said in bemusement.

"Eloquent as always, Sir."

His entire face creased in thought, the engineer kicked his chair away from the table, rolling to the center of the surrounding ring of work stations and sat there, stone still except for sneakered feet tapping lightly against the floor. For several long minutes, the irregular tapping was an almost visible representation of the odd starts, stops and leaps his thought processes were taking. Tony could have no more have stopped his feet from moving than he could have shut down his brain.

"Jarvis. Those readings? Are they what I think they are?"

"I believe so, Sir; barring a few trace elements that are most likely due to the small scale smelting process you used, this is almost identical--"

"Suck a fucking duck."

"Not quite how I would have expressed myself, Sir."

Tony started, shooting a glance at the camera on the far wall.

"You know, Jarvis. Notwithstanding that I am your creator; I am also a Prinsgemalen of Asgard

now, so you really need to cut back on the sass when you speak to me.”

“Do I, Sir?”

“Yes, or I will tell Marji on you. You know you don’t want me to do that.”

“Indeed not, Sir; please erase my code, dismantle my servers. Please, please do anything but tell Prince Loki’s Nurse on me.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “You are such a smug fuck, you know that, Jarvis?”

“Indeed. And your every comment is pure poetry, Sir.”

Tony just groaned. “Seriously, Jarv, he just tossed a sack of almost pure vibranium ore down at my feet like it was nothing. *Almost pure*. In a mineral that is usually only found in trace quantities, and has to be smelted to hell and back to be useful. Who knows what properties the other unknown samples will possess?” Brows knitted in thought, Tony looked up. “Where is he right now Jarvis? I want to see him.”

“Prince Loki is currently scheduled to be at the construction location. Would you like me to send word to the stables to ready you a mount?”

Tony grimaced.

He really, really didn’t like horses. Well, he liked horses recreationally. Kinda. Or he could be okay with them since Loki enjoyed them so much, but for general transportation? He couldn’t stand them. You had call someone to bring them to you, find somewhere safe to tether them when you got where you were going, be careful how long you left them there, and generally just worry about them the whole time you were out. So after the briefest moment of consideration he decided. No horses.

“Hell no. I’ll take the e-cycle. Lock everything up; I’m off to see Mister Wizard.”

“You know Prince Loki does not like you calling him that, wizards being low magic hacks in his opinion. Also, as I recall, King Odin does not like you using your bike in the city proper, Sir.”

“Really, Jarvis? A vehicle that easily pulls hard speeds above one hundred and ten miles per hour, and offers a city range of up to 211 miles? I think we can call it a motorcycle rather than bike, even if it doesn’t guzzle gas. As for Odin not liking it? He can bite me. The damn thing is quiet, fast, and doesn’t leave frickin’ horse apples all over the place. How damn sanitary is that, huh? And they are a lot smaller than a sky barge. Now, get ready to hit the vent, will ya?” Tony practically skipped over to his spray booth. Then after a quick swipe with a disposable towelette to clean his face, he put a full face mask on, and used a few carefully directed blasts of compressed air to hose clear most of the mineral dust off his hair. While he directed the compressed blasts towards his clothes, Jarvis turned on a powerful vacuum to remove all the airborne debris from the clean booth. As soon as the cycle was complete, Tony bounced over to the tiny shower booth.

“True enough, Sir,” Jarvis replied continuing their previous conversation as Tony exited the shower area, hopping a bit as he slipped on clean clothes. “But perhaps you could keep your speed low enough that Prince Thor isn’t sent to talk to you again.”

Tony grabbed his jacket, the waning day drifting just to the side of too cool to ride without one. “Yeah. Sure. I can probably manage that.”

“I’m sure you will Sir,” Jarvis replied, his tone indicating the virtual electronic eye roll on an epic

scale was taking place.

OoooO

As per usual, Tony found his workaholic consort up to his shapely ass in Dwarf and Æsir minions who required clarification of this assignment or that. His desk was covered with plans that he was making notations on, while warning them of possible complications to keep an eye out for. And he was, for a change, in the small construction office he used and not out on the Bi-Frost site itself. This saved Tony the time it would take to drag him there.

“Hey everyone! Gosh, good to see you all beavering away so diligently. You know what? You all need to go be diligent somewhere else for a couple of hours. Except of course for you, Sugar. You need to stay right where you are at.” Tony smirked and waggled his brows at Loki, receiving a grimace in return and his second eye-roll of the hour.

“Hell, it’s late, why don’t you just tidy up the work site and all go home, I have to have a very important conference with His Nibs here, and he won’t be available the rest of the afternoon.” Tony finished on a high note and started shooing a few of the Dwarf artificers that Loki had been instructing away, maintaining a huge grin on his face while avoiding Loki’s somewhat incredulous stare.

Tilting his head and propping it up on two elegant fingers, Loki looked up at Tony a moment before glancing over at his construction supervisors who were, sadly, not as confused as they should have been, at the presence of the strange little mortal trying to order them around.

“Those who have received their assignments, please go prepare your crews and materials for tomorrow. Those who have not, please go see Esja Lyndrisdottir; she should be on her way back from the paymaster at any minute now. Ask her for a job off the miscellaneous list that needs to be completed. I’ll require a list tomorrow of which tasks were assigned and the progress made on them.” He turned to his inside guard. “Hoen, please don’t let anyone disturb us; apparently Prinsgemalen Stark needs to urgently consult with me. I’ll let you know if we are leaving early this afternoon.” He waved them all away with the hand he wasn’t using to hold his head up.

Barely waiting until Hoen assumed his normal ‘guard’ stance with his back to the door, Tony closed and locked it.

“You,” Tony declared, stalking towards Loki, “are the best consort in the Nine Realms.”

Loki huffed, but Tony could make out a tiny smile trying to tug at the corners of his lips.

“Admittedly there aren’t many to choose from, but even if there were hundreds, you would still be the absolute. Best. One.”

Sitting back in his chair, Loki’s head lifted a bit as he considered Tony’s words and current demeanor.

Squirming between the seated Loki and the desk, Tony swung his legs so that they straddled Loki’s knees. Then he reached back, shoving all the papers Loki had been working on just moments earlier off the desk. Tony leaned back against the edge of the desk, pulling Loki forward.

“Tonight I want to scrub you and rub you in the bathing pool until your muscles melt, and then I’m going to lick every inch of you dry.”

“And in order to tell me that, you had to send my staff and guards away?”

“Well describing to strangers what I want to do to you is kinky, but if you want me to start doing it in front of them, I’m game,” Tony said with a cheeky wink.

Tony slithered down onto a bemused Loki’s knees. “But this,” Tony dug a silk wrapped packet out of his jacket pocket, and unwrapped it to show Loki the tube of Earthgardian Lube nestled inside of it. “Is for right now. Just you, just me. I want you to take me over this damn desk right now. I want it deep, hard and fast.”

Loki just blinked a moment, no doubt wondering about Tony’s sanity, since neither of them were natural bottoms.

“And the scarf?” He asked finally, letting it’s silky fold slither through his fingers.

“Well, unless you want everyone on the work site to know what you are doing in here, I think you might want to gag me. Because I definitely am going to be screaming your name before it is all over.”

Chapter End Notes

Note - Even just writing 'Extra Kudos' totally counts as a comment, fulfilling your Tumblr, Year of the Comment, count. :)

**** Trigger Warnings **** The mildest, briefest, mention only, of smut.

Chapter 17 – Avenging insults

Chapter Summary

Alcohol, and insults, are just not a good combination. Nor does it help that Tony is feeling just a bit feisty this evening.

Chapter Notes

Many thanks to my Beta'd team [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta tinkering mistakes are mine.

***** If you have Triggers - Read and Heed the Trigger Warnings in the End Notes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 17 – Avenging insults

Fighting to keep a sour expression off his face, Tony took yet another gulp of his watered down mead. Having learned the hard way that while straight up mead wouldn't kill him, thank you enhanced physique, it would give him a hang over that would make him wish it had. Fortunately for Tony, like the rest of the royal family, he had his own personal servant following him around with the tippie of his choice, ready to refill his gobbet the moment it got even half empty. Not so fortunately, like the rest of the royal family, his presence was required at all these damn feasts particularly when they were for important reasons, like the fact that it was Tuesday, or some such crap.

Just as Tony was thinking his evening couldn't get any worse, there was this guy.

“Prinsgemalen Stark, a moment of your time, if I may.”

Hiding a massive eye roll by taking another large drink from his goblet, Tony then held it out to be refilled, despite already feeling a bit on the go. Nearly drunk or not, Tony had a feeling he was going to need another drink very shortly. Fixing one of his more obnoxious smiles on his face while sighing inwardly, he nodded in a way that could have been taken as a polite greeting. But only if one was totally clueless. Not that a scowl or even anything short of a missile launch would have prevented Hafji, one of Loki's more persistent gadflies, from launching into yet another sales pitch for the polishing abrasives his district sold.

One thing you had to give AssGuardians is that they seldom gave up. Not that he would ever share it with Thor, but it was Tony's private theory that most of the sword slingers just weren't smart enough to recognize a lost cause. Heck, sometimes even Tony knew it was time to quit. Not often admittedly, but sometimes.

However, from the flushed face, and determined look in his eye, it was apparent that the idiot in front of him wanted to continue the fight in the best (worst), never give in, never give up, Asgardian form. So bowing to the inevitable, Tony sipped his drink and waited for the long

winded bastard to finish his spiel.

Which, after several long getting on Tony's last nerve moments, he finally did.

"Look. Hafji, right? It isn't personal. But, no matter how fine your products are for stone or metal work, they just aren't suited for polishing the Bi-Frost crystal." Hafji puffed up indignantly, crowding Tony just a bit.

"My district has been supplying constructions abrasives since before Odin became All Father, so you can be sure, that I do not appreciate *Loki* impugning my district's products for straw-picking reasons."

Yeah? And Tony didn't appreciate anyone trying to loom over him. So he planted his feet, like Steve's damn metaphorical tree, while he knocked back another long drink, making the fuming lord wait for his response. Watching from under downcast lashes Tony dragged out the moment until his cup was empty and the face of the Asgardian in front of him was just shy of fire plug red.

Now.

"Look buddy, as long as you've known Loki, have you ever known him not to have his ducks in a row?" Okay, from the confuzzled expression that flitted across the man's highly flushed face, it was clear Earthgardian slang wasn't working here. "Errr, Have you ever know Loki not to have rock solid reasons for why his way is the best way? Even if you don't agree with it? Because let me tell you, even Odin has a hard time out arguing the guy. By the way, how long have you known Loki? You guys like live like for forever, so I am guessing a long time. Right? Whatever. Even if you don't *know him*, know him. So, you must *know* that no matter what it takes, the guy gets what he wants. Right? So, what you should be asking your self is how can I give him what he wants, with the least amount of danger to my balls? Which hey, in your case is pretty easy, since he just wants you to zip your lips, crawl back under a rock somewhere and quit nagging him about your inferior polishing crap. Which he is *NEVER* going to use, because it doesn't come up to the specs he needs for the Bi-Frost crystal."

Smiling acidly, Tony watched Hafji slip away.

OoooO

He and Loki have discussed what growth they would like to see in Asgard, to drag it mentally out of the middle ages. The one change Tony knows that Loki would like sooner, rather than later, was the whole overblown defense of masculinity, not that Tony blames him on that one. Living in Asgard is like being sentenced to never ending football camp. And yes, Tony is well aware of what that is like. Just to make sure he didn't develop any sissy tendencies, Howard had once sent, an extremely unwilling thirteen year old Tony, to a whole summer long Football Camp. It was, until Afghanistan, the longest forty-five hours of his life.

And to this day, Tony has no regrets about stealing the head coach's Camaro. Nor about refusing to tell anyone he'd left it in the long term parking lot at Newark Airport. Howard of course had been livid. Not that Tony had cared too much about that either. He had, by then, begun to wonder about how Howard's own obsession with Captain Tight pants. What with his strident denunciations of any tendencies of Tony's that Howard considered effeminate.

Hell, the sanctimonious bastard had no doubt wept tears of joy the first time Tony had been busted with a hooker.

And predictably, Tony's pondering the topic of toxic masculinity, seemed to bring it to the attention

of those Norn bitches.

Trailing behind the brothers, as Thor, with Loki at his side glad handed their way through the crowd, Tony was almost even with a fairly nondescript, middle aged noble when the bastard hissed at Loki's back.

"Ergi. Lover of men."

Since neither of the brothers had paid Joe-Anybody the least bit of attention, Tony imagined Joe guy must have been a nonentity from one of the providences. Doubtless visiting more well connected family or friends.

And honestly, Tony would have kept right on moving, after all it isn't the first time he's heard that comment. Hell, it isn't even the hundredth time. But this evening? Tony is three quarters of the way to being drunk, and full up to here with Asgard's attitude. And when Joe Nobody's companion's started snickering, he just couldn't take it any more.

Tony stopped short, turning to face the bastard with a wide lazy smile and point his goblet at the man. "You do know it is a general rule that the only people who make a fuss about this egri-stuff either wish be doing it too, or are too chicken shit to admit they are doing it in secret."

Since it isn't only Joe Bastard's eyes that bug out of their sockets, Tony waved for his cup bearer to take his goblet. Just in case someone decides to do more than look at him like he is insane.

"Or to put it in Space Viking speak, 'Methinks thou dost protest too much'.

Tony has never heard what a mortally wounded Bilgesnipe sounds like, but he is pretty sure it was much like the roar Joe Bastard let out before leaping towards Tony, with murder in his eyes.

OooooO

Guards, materializing, seemingly out of nowhere. They surged to get between Tony and the enraged man, who was now shouting for holmgang, right here, right now, and with the weapons at hand.

"Well if you insist upon hand weapons only because you are afraid to face the Iron Man in his armor then you will have to fight a different Stark." Loki declared mildly, he and Thor having immediately taken several steps back towards Tony when the Norse cow-patty had hit the rapidly revolving air mover.

"Loki what madness is this, leave it alone. Hafji," Thor called to the lord, who was suspiciously, in Tony's opinion, standing not far behind Joe Bastard. "Your cousin Laut goes too far, as head of his house you need to speak with him, you know Prinsgemalen Stark was provoked."

"With all deference Prince Thor, I'm afraid I am the only one to decide when my honor has been offended." Laut's obeisance was respectful, even if his tone was not. Lifting his head, his tone took on more of a sneer as he continued, "And if your brother thinks that I will trade powered armor with missiles and projectiles, which are not at hand, for Seldor, which is, he is quite mistaken. I will fight Stark, dressed as we are, hand weapons hand only, and those not to leave the hand. As the offended party it is my prerogative to choose the nature of our fight."

"And it is my prerogative to tell you that you're a pompo--"

Loki pushed Tony towards Thor, hissing something in a language Tony didn't understand.

“Hey!” Tony yelled falling sideways and crashing into Thor who grasped and held him with arms as stiff as steel girders. “Holmgang be damned Thor! He’s your little brother! You supposed to protect him, not let *murffh!*” in mid rant Tony’s lip were suddenly sealed shut, reducing his powers of communication to muted swear words.

“Indeed.” Loki grinned widely, and tipped his head in acknowledgment of Laut’s claim. “And I, as a member of the ***House of Stark*** will meet you to satisfy claims against the head of my house, as is my prerogative.” Totally ignoring Tony’s wild eye stare, Loki snorted, his disdain for the red faced country bumpkin in front of him apparent to all. “It shall be as you wish. We will fight without magic, use only weapons that stay in the hand, and only those available to us here and now.

“Only until first blood Loki.” Thor growled, glaring balefully at the suddenly unsure Hafji, holding tightly onto a struggling, angry, but magically muffled Tony.

“Oh Thor. Where’s the fun of that.” The corners of Loki’s mouth curled in an evil grin. He intently regarded the much larger warrior who had challenged Tony.

“Loki...” Thor growled again, narrowing his eyes and trying to will his younger sibling to obedience with only a look. Something that he was rarely able to do.

“Very well Thor,” Loki said surprising both Thor and Tony with how readily he agreed. “Shall we say best two out of three at least?” When no agreement was immediately forthcoming, he cast a dismissive look at Laut who was chewing his lower lip thoughtfully, and casting sideway glances towards Hafji, the head of *his* house. Who he had no doubt had instigated the whole affair as a way to get back at Loki, thinking to strike at a much softer target than the son of Frigga, and brother of Thor.

“Or, are you afraid to meet the Stark who is not a Midgardian and more than half a head shorter than you are?” Loki queried, his voice lightly tinged with mockery, while completely dismissing the heart attack that Tony having in, ***forced silence***, not three feet away.

Although, Tony was sure, if Laut had half a brain, he was doubtless worried about meeting Loki. He most likely had been convinced by, ***someone of a Hafji-ish nature***, that he would be dealing with Tony, who Midgardian hero or not, did not have the height, weight, reach or training of the even an average Æsir warrior. But from what Thor was muttering, even as custom allowed the jackass to call holmgang on Tony, it also allowed Loki as a member of Stark’s house to take his place. While Tony knew the full nature of Odin’s restraints upon Loki, those being greatly reduced strength and restricted magic, the general public didn’t. However from the muttering of the crowd, they seemed to find it significant that Loki had not gone to the sparing ring even once since he had returned to Asgard several years ago. Tony was pretty sure this tidbit of info was the only reason that Laut wasn’t trying to find some way to back out of the fight.

Well, that and he would pretty much be the laughing stock of half of Asgard if he backed out.

Half wishing he had kept his damn mouth shut Tony sighed as well as he was able with his lips sealed together. The only reason he wasn’t completely out of his mind with worry, was he knew his god was in great form. Tony had gone to several sparing matches to pass the time, and while your average space Viking was good, none of them were anywhere near Thor’s skill level. Also, according to Thunderpants, the only people who had ever beat him with any regularity were Loki, and that bitch Sif. Sif because she was better with a sword than Thor was, and Loki apparently because he was so fast, and supple, that you could rarely lay a hand on the bastard.

“Agreed,” the slightly gone to seed, if only when compared to Thor warrior, said at last.

Still, possibly slow moving opponent or not, maybe it was a good thing Loki had zipped his lips before the main event started. Otherwise Tony might have one or two small words to say at the top of his lungs about his god putting himself in danger. Actually, there was no ‘might’ about it, Tony definitely felt a need to scream at someone. If not Loki, then definitely Thor for not stepping in a stopping his brother. And Tony also feels a need to have a serious fucking talk with Mister Mistofolees about taking this lip locking thing out of his bag of tricks in the future. Or maybe just seeing if Loki-mom might have a counter charm she could weave for him or something.

Tony was just wishing that Weasly’s Wizardly Weazes, was an actual store that offered counter-jinx delivery service to Asgard, when Loki came over to him, did the little finger twitch thing and unsealed his mouth.

“What the hell do y--” Tony started, but didn’t get to continue because Loki grabbed the back of his neck, leaning over until words were muffled into Loki’s shoulder and his god’s were brushing against Tony’s ear.

“I need to talk to you for a minute. Over by the alcove.” Loki pulled back, lowered his head and stared hard into Tony’s eyes.

Okaaaaay. So important maybe? Fine, Tony could spare a few minutes before he went ballistic. He was flexible like that.

Tony allowed himself to be towed the requisite several yards towards the side of the room, and then Loki spun him around so Tony’s back blocked him from view. “Lokkkkki,” Tony voice warned he was in no mood for anymore evasions.

Or lip zipping. Yeah that was a given.

To the other’s in the room, it might have looked as if the taller God had wanted to take a last bit of comfort from his partner before the fight. But unseen by all, including Tony, Loki was snaking his hands into Tony’s jacket and pulling up his shirt. “Look, Bambi, much as I love the fact that you have forgiven me... Is this really the place?”

“Hide this, don’t let anyone know you have it,” The dark god hissed in his ear, his breath warm on Tony’s neck, almost distracting him from the clever fingers that were buckling that ostentatiously bejeweled belt Loki had taken to wearing around Tony’s waist. He then pulled Tony’s shirt over it and re-tucked it loosely to cover the jeweled belt that hummed, and tickled where it touched Tony’s bare skin in six, no, seven places... the minute vibrations feeling very much like an... arc reactor.

And just like that Tony had to answer to a lot of niggling little questions he’d had about the Jotunheim minerals Loki had gotten for him... And the various times coffee, and components had been mysteriously discovered stashed in odd places when Tony could have sworn he’d used up the last of them. Arc reactors were power sources. And, to keep Loki from skipping out of Asgard, or getting too carried away with himself, Odin had restricted Loki’s ability to provide power to his magic. Or he had, until Loki had figured out a way to use Tony’s tech to get around that restriction. And yeah, there was no way Loki wanted to be scrutinized too closely while wearing something like that.

Still ...

“You’re still mortalish! Physically, mostly at any rate. You can’t do this.” Tony said, fingers twisting tightly into Loki’s jacket and doing a little ear hissing of his own.”

“While I may indulge you from time to time, I am not really your pampered darling in need of protection, you do realize that, yes?”

“Yeah. Yeah. I got it.” And Tony does, and honestly, he wouldn’t have it any other way. Well, except for the days that he wishes it was true with all his heart. “But babe, I got to tell you, there is a lot of room between pampered darling of the House of Stark, and idiot Asgardian trying to get himself killed. Do you think maybe, you could stay away from the outer edge a bit more often? Just a favor to me?” And if there is more than a bit of hiss to his voice, good. Loki needs to know Tony is not at all happy.

“It will be fine Tony, you will find that my speed is still more than a match for that lumbering ox, but if something goes awry, or a protest is lodged, I dare not be caught with this.” Loki said in a hard whisper before giving Tony’s shirt one last smoothing pat and then pulling him into a hard hug. “Now come watch me take this oaf to pieces.”

So, tamping back both fear and anger, and slyly making sure his pocket repulsor was at the ready. Asgardian rules and honor be damned, there was no way he was going to let some mid-tier yutz do damage to what was his. What with Loki having to pay it out for those vault guards, Tony totally understands wergild. And he is pretty sure he could come up with the amount required for anyone lower than Odin’s Council. And really? Right now? He is in more than a mood to kill someone.

There were words for the way Loki moved as he fought, grace, power, elegance, strength. For an engineer, and not someone who made their living with words, those would have to suffice. When he wasn’t walking almost sideways, watching his opponent from the corner of his eye, Loki paced not unlike a panther who had been taught classical dance. his steps were at once deliberate, yet delicate. Every step was a smooth as if he had been performing an intricate ritual, rather than waiting for the chance to take his opponent apart.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr Year of the Comment Crib Sheet!

Simple - "Loved it!", "Too funny", "Thanks for Sharing", "Heeehehehehehe!"- Even just a couple of words (or key smash combos) totally count, and are most appreciated.

Feels - "LMAO!", "Oh my god, this was so sad", "I grinned the entire chapter" - All would be appreciated comments.

Favorite Bit - "X was a great twist", "I did not expect X to happen!", "Whoa. X? Not normally my cup of tea, but you wrote it so well" - Writers love to hear what and why something caught your attention.

Copy/Comment - “(Insert copied line) - I could not believe he actually said that to her! or What the heck? Are these two trying to kill me? or WTF were they thinking! He knows this isn't going to end well! Arggghhh. - This is more or less interacting with the characters, while letting the author know what really caught your attentions.

****** Trigger Warnings **** None that I am aware of.**

Chapter 18 - Swaying Reeds

Chapter Summary

Tony gets a chance to see his god in action. And then there is Odin.....

Chapter Notes

Many thanks to my Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes are my bad.

***** If you have Triggers - Read and Heed the Trigger Warnings in the End Notes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 18 - Swaying Reeds

Loki was aware that many eyes were on him. He was also aware of the damage it would do his, and Tony's position if he allowed any sign of distress to show at the situation Tony's mouth had landed them in. However, he was after all a consummate actor and word-smith, so he was well able to hide the fact that he was completely and totally livid. Had this happened somewhere away from witnesses, he would have been had pressed not to shove his longest dagger into the back of the insolent pig who dared challenge Tony.

Later, he would rub his aching temples, and rail at the Norns for giving him a partner who kept forgetting he wasn't on Midgard. And later than that, he definitely intended to make sure that Tony knew that he should have ignored the man. Only those bold enough to raise their voices, and speak out clearly needed to be dealt with. The whispers of cowardly nithlings were deemed beneath notice, and rebounded to their ill, not yours, *unless* you gave them importance by being the type to listen to scurrilous whispers. Something no *true* Aesir warrior would do.

It was fortunate that no matter what he felt, Loki was practiced enough to project calm indifference towards the contest about to take place. He was, after all, a consummate actor, and thus was able to hide the fact that he was completely and totally livid at Hafji. Who, he had no doubt, had arranged his cousin's presumption. Hafji's increasing desperation meant it might be time to consider a solution that was more permanent than those Loki had thus far employed. He was leaning towards garroting the bastard like a common criminal some dark night, and sending him straight to Náströnd so Níðhöggr could gnaw on his dishonored bones. And while he seldom asked her for favors, Loki wouldn't hesitate to bribe Hel into making sure Hafji's suffering was extended as long as it could be.

Granted *Loki* had been putting up with naut skítur like this for centuries, some subtle, some blatant, and to be honest, some of it well deserved. But there was no power in the nine realms that would convince him that Tony deserved such treatment merely because he associated with Loki. Therefore, if Hafji thought for one second that he would allow anyone to attack Tony, he would soon find out that he was much mistaken, as would his cousin. Loki might not have his normal

Æsir strength, but he was still faster than most of the men in Asgard, including that mannerless boar that had dared to threaten the head of *Loki's house*.

Even with the way Tony's cowardly challenger had structured the holmgang to avoid Tony's armor, Loki was fairly certain he could win. However, since letting the oaf lay even a single hand on him could be disastrous, Loki would just have to be clever about it.

After one last glance to make sure his belt was more or less hidden under Tony's shirt, Loki steered his now remarkably sober, if quite stressed, partner back towards the crowd surrounding Thor.

OoooO

While he and Tony had been arguing, a few enterprising souls had made sure the adjoining Younglings' Lawn was cleared for their fight. Getting it ready was not a terribly difficult task, since the traditional boundary lines were already delineated by a broad band of blue stone pavers embedded in the grass. After all, it wasn't like someone calling holmgang at a feast was all that unusual. In fact the only thing Loki had to do before exiting the hall was to hop up on a side table to lift a spear shaped decorative swag holder out of its brackets.

"What?" Loki demanded when Hafji, opened his mouth to complain. "It is an available weapon, as agreed upon." Loki scoffed. "Did you honestly think I was going to go up against your sword with only a dagger that can't leave my hand?" And from the expression on both men's faces, Loki could see *that* was exactly what they had been hoping.

Oafs, Loki thought dismissively. Or, *fucking stupid Ass-guard morons* as Tony was wont to say.

Tilting his head in what was clearly feigned confusion, he asked, "Surely you are not that really thinking that? But then again..." Loki allowed his voice to trail off as if resigned to the fact that *'yes, Hafji, and anyone related to him was just that stupid'*.

OoooO

Okay, so Twinkle Toes gazelle-ing up a table to snatch down some gaudy looped cloth thingy was a bit of a welcome surprise. He knew Loki was good with daggers, but he mainly liked to throw the damn things. His heavy weapon of choice, when not resorting to magic, was a staff. However, once stripped of its celebration-of-who-gives-a-fuck cloth streamer, Loki now had about a six foot length of metal with a spear pointy looking finial thingy on one end. With what he knew of Asgardian decoration, it probably wasn't a curtain rod, but rather a real staff that had used for space Viking aesthetics. Which was, good enough.

Relieved that Loki wasn't going to a sword fight with a dagger made Tony feel marginally less murderous. He still wasn't happy about this, particularly with his part in causing it, and they were definitely going to discuss the whole Loki taking his place—because better training, bullshit. They were going to discuss it in detail, and no doubt at the top of their lungs, just as soon as he got his bastard god somewhere they could scream at each other in privacy. Because god be damned training or not, Odin be damned, Lo simply didn't have the strength right now to go toe to toe with an Æsir.

Besides, Tony was supposed to be protecting Loki, not the other fucking way around. He really, really needed a pocket dimension to stash his suit in. Or baring that, a Cujo bag of infinite holding that would follow him around like Darcy's Hound of the Baskervilles messenger tote did.

The part of his brain in charge of stupid stuff that didn't involve suit toting, hoped Loki's-not-mom didn't fuss too much about her kid snatching down one of her wall drapes. Knowing how Loki

doesn't really give a single fuck about the things most *'traditional'* Asgardians hold dear, Tony wouldn't bet against it being a historically important streamer commemorating the Bor family's creation of the universe, or a gift from the Norns. Of course, with the way Thor let out a big whoosh of relief as Loki twirled, and tested the balance of his borrowed staff, he figured the Queen-mum might cut her youngest some slack.

But just in case ...

There were going to have enough flack over this; they didn't need to add damage to a possibly irreplaceable heirlooms. Grabbing the bundle of cloth off the floor before anyone could step on it; Tony broke stride to thrust it at Errol Flynn, who was trailing behind them. "Fold this neatly, and stick it somewhere safe," he demanded flatly, before taking several little skip steps to catch up with his god as they entered into the kids' garden.

And no, Tony did not think about the irony of a dueling square being permanently installed in the children's area, he was far too pissed to be distracted by thoughts like that. However, his inner asshole had paused to consider it, and concluded that long ago, some elder female decided that if their menfolk were going to squabble like little kids, they could do it in the playground. Elderly Female was no doubt violently opposed to having such an item in the adjoining *courting* garden. And having seen Frigga and Marji in a snit, Tony was well aware of how viciously Asgardian women could oppose something.

OooooO

After a brief reciting of the rules by an elderly bystander, which were pretty much rattled off like a waitress going over the daily specials, the combatants entered the ring. And then, as far as Tony was concerned, Loki pretty much ceased to be visible.

What the actual fuck?

Tony wasn't aware that he had spoken out loud until Thor, who was looming right behind him, leaned in so close that his lips brushed Tony's hair. And while Thor breathing intimately into his ear wasn't the most disturbing thing that Tony had ever experienced, it was definitely in his top twenty. "Did you never notice the snakes on my brother's vambraces, Tony? Ever has he fought like this. Striking multiple times, faster than the eye can see, and then retreating until he can do it again." Even whispered, Thor's voice denoted pride in Loki's ability to survive. But his next words were in a much more concerned rumble, "But while Loki is skilled, he dare not let Laut land a blow or maneuver him into a corner. He must avoid being forced out of bounds, ever maintaining the center of the square while evading a telling blow."

The cost of maintaining the center was apparently swirling around his opponent at high speed while swaying and ducking a wildly swinging blade. When Loki wasn't using his damn curtain rod to smack the guy's sword to one side, every other swing was thwacking the shit out of his opponent. Not that a curtain rod was making much headway with the armor these guys thought was appropriate to wear to dinner. Even though the curtain rod was more than likely a solid metal spear honorably retired to decorative duties... It wasn't sharpened. Had it been, Loki might have been able to slice through something and draw first blood.

Tony has known that Loki was fast. But seriously, he hadn't known he was that freaking fast. His god was literally spinning, sliding, and sidestepping right around the muffin-faced asshole, *and* the three foot hunk of razor sharp metal he was waving. If Loki had been wielding a decent weapon, or could have gotten close enough to knife the bastard, it would've been over several times already. Unfortunately, first blood only, did not allow for spearing someone under an amour joint would cause. Something Loki totally could have done, un-sharpened edges or no, since Laut was taking

hit after hit on the heavily armored upraised arm he was protecting his face and exposed neck with. However, the force required for a rib stabbing attack to succeed, could have just as easily resulted Laut's death, violating the first blood only restrictions. Or worse in Tony's opinion, Loki's spear getting stuck, leaving him with only a knife to protect himself with.

Then, in a move that almost stopped Tony's heart, Loki stepped into a swing, batted the slashing blade aside and slid under the guy's sword arm. He ended up to the right of his opponent, where in passing, Loki used the butt of his spear to deal what would have been a punishing blow to the guy's kidneys. Or what would have been a punishing blow, *if* Loki had been running at full strength.

Which he god damned wasn't.

Ten minutes in, teeth bared, breathing heavily, Loki was in some kind of berserker mode. Since neither wanted to give up the center, and Loki was not the one with the sword, he had to take a dozen steps, and make a dozen strikes to every swing that Laut made. This resulted in the guy basically spinning in place to keep Loki from getting behind him. No doubt a smart move, because Tony was pretty sure that if Loki could ever get behind him for more than an instant, he'd drop that damn pole, and whip out his knife for a close strike.

But no matter how good, or how fast Loki was, the other guy was armored, and had a fricken sword. And unfortunately, the law of averages decreed that despite being outclassed, Laut was occasionally going to catch a break.

The crowd gasped as Loki swayed backwards, escaping what would have been a lot more than a first blood blow. Eyes narrowing, and Thor hissing curses in Tony's ear, Tony snuck his repulsor clad hand out of his pocket.

Before Loki could straighten up, Laut reversed his swing and had Loki throwing himself backwards. Using his makeshift staff to block a fairly brutal strike, Loki grunted as the force of the blow slid, with a shower of sparks, to bury itself several inches into the grass above Loki's shoulder. Now growling, Tony raised his hand to fire, only to stop in amazement. Loki, teeth bared, released his pole and locked both his hands onto his opponent's wrist. Flat on his back, knees in tight, Loki kicked up brutally, catching Laut's chest as the man leaned over him. Had Laut not been trying to push past his guard, it wouldn't have worked. But as it was, Loki was able to straighten his legs, and using his opponent's awkward stance, flip the bastard over his head. There was a roar from the crowd, and an indrawn gasp from Thor, as Laut landed in a sprawl several feet away.

What the— Then it dawned on Tony why the crowd was in an uproar. Laut, had landed with one foot clearly outside the stone border of the fight zone, and that apparently, was an automatic forfeit.

Both men scrambled to their feet. But Tony was surprised to see Loki kick away his staff, unearth the sword to toss it in the same direction, and then standing tall and proud, he pulled a dagger out of his sleeve sheath, and held it up for all to see. A wry smile crossed his lips, before he opened his hand, letting the dagger tumble to the ground on top the other weapons. Turning his back on Laut, wickedly glittering green eyes sought out Tony's.

Swallowing, dry mouthed, Tony hastily withdrew his outstretched arm, and tucked that hand in his pocket, quickly shedding the mini-repulsor.

Tony was torn. Part of him was angry, no, livid that his still strength-deprived god had inserted himself, armed with no more than a curtain rod, into a problem that Tony had caused. It had admittedly been an Asgardian curtain rod on steroids, but still. If Tony hadn't allowed the damn

fight to be forced on him in the first place, Loki wouldn't have risked himself for Tony's stupidity. And yet despite being totally pissed off at his own responsibility in causing the incident, Tony was not in the least bit happy that despite having more than mortal strength, Loki thought him too inept to defend himself without his suit. The two of them would definitely be hashing that out later this evening.

However, a more base area of Tony's brain was glad that he himself was rocking 'Æsir Wear' consisting of tight leather pants and the long leather jacket. Because frankly, they were the only thing keeping the whole of Asgard from knowing how, turned on he had gotten while watching his tall god kick ass. Tony did spare a moment's thought to wonder if it was normal for adrenaline junkies to sport hard wood from watching their gorgeous partners defeat someone. He'd ask Clint, if he thought there was any chance of getting an answer without him squealing to Natasha.

Okay, so just because Tony was pissed, that didn't mean there wasn't a part of him that totally wanted to drag Loki away and re-stake his claim as Head of the House of Stark. Perhaps by spending a few hours pulling sweet cries from his god, until Loki's dark green eyes were blown almost black? Tony swallowed hard, because honestly, that could work for him. But he could also envision spending hours petting, and showering affection on his god of badassery to make sure he felt thoroughly cosseted, and cared for.

Honestly, Tony didn't know what he wanted to do. Neither? All of the above? Perhaps with some screaming for risking himself thrown in? There were dozens of different signals racing up and down his nervous system, all of which were keeping Tony on the razor's edge, despite the fight being over.

And then, beside him, Thor let loose a groan that sounded like it was ripped right out of the older god's chest.

Now What?

However, before Tony could even glance at Thor, his wicked, hot god started to sauntered over towards them. Deciding to worry about Thor and all his conflicting feels later, Tony fell back on his go to behavior.

Snark.

"Can I gloat?" Tony asked, lifting an inquiring brow as Loki made his way over to them.

"It's not wise, or attractive, but yes, you are entitled to crow as loud as you wish. It is after all **traditional**." Loki replied, his normal disdainful pronunciation of the word 'traditional', softened by the tiny, disbelieving, head shake at how Tony's priorities were aligning more and more with those of Asgard's general population.

Laut, helped up by Hafji, and a few of his friends, or possibly family members, since Tony didn't figure a guy like that had a lot of friends, started screaming at Loki, "You filthy ergi! Always hiding behind your brother! Always using your seiðr to try and best those better than you! How dare you--"

"How dare YOU!" Thor bellowed in return. Right in the middle of taking another bellow fueling deep breath, Tony elbowed him hard in the ribs. The interrupted intake of air caused Thor to choke.

Thank you augmented strength!

"I've got this, point break," Tony said almost giddy at the chance for a cathartic verbal smack

down to relieve the mixed tensions thrumming through his body.

Patting angry older brother comfortingly, Tony glowered at angry knot of men. “Okay. Let’s get this straight, right now. Nobody used any magic.” Glancing over at a gaggle of practitioners he called out, “Back me up here, ladies. Was anyone using seiðr?” After a brief consultation amongst themselves, the oldest one called out.

“Prince Thor, Lord Stark, we felt no powers being released.”

His overly elaborate ‘*Thank You*’ bow caused more than a few chuckles, so he winked before turning back towards Hafji’s crew. Since Tony knew, that at some point Odin was going to express his happiness with this evening’s activity; he figured he might as well go for the gold. It was after all, Asgard’s metal of choice.

“See, no seiðr.” Sliding around his eye rolling Trickster, who Tony was totally going to deal with later, he planted himself right in front of the almost growling Hafji, and looked up at him with an evil grin before transferring his gaze to the man’s cousin. “This means I have a question for you, big guy.” Something in his expression or tone must have tipped Thor off; he stopped checking Loki for damage, and made an abortive grab for Tony. However, since his heart really hadn’t been in it, Tony nimbly avoided him. “So.... Ergi? According to you, Loki is ergi? Okay... So if my beautiful ergi partner can pretty much whip your sword wielding ass with only a curtain rod, and without breaking a sweat or looking one bit less gorgeous than he always does... What the hell does that make you?”

Homicidal apparently.

Tony jumped back as Laut pulled a dagger from his belt and surged forward. The crowd gasped, and there was a general milling, some retreating, but several people, including a very much alarmed Hafji managed to snag the enraged warrior. Thor hastily stepped in front of his brother.

Taking a moment to reorient, Tony nodded sardonic thanks to those now holding their angry kinsman back, and upped the wattage on his smirk. Mugging for the crowd, Tony spread both arms out to his sides, holding his palms up questioningly, he shrugged. “What is lower than ergi?”

With an evil smirk Tony took a step back to give himself enough room to swing his outstretched hands out in front of him, pointing both index fingers at Laut, he paused a beat to be sure all attention was on him before crowing, “Apparently, you.” He allowed his grin to grow shark-like, “According to your own logic, you are lower than an ergi.”

And didn ’t that go over well.

The crowd gasped. With a wordless bellow, Laut tore himself away from the appalled head of his house, and the others holding him, again diving towards Tony.

Only to bounce back as Thor stepped in front of Tony Not that he cared; Tony had already jammed his hand back into his pocket and slipped the repulsor back on. He hoped the bastard would break free so he’d be able to shoot the shit out of the rat-bastard.

Unfortunately, before this happy event could occur, there was a lot of clacking and foot stomping as dozens of Palace guards poured into the Garden. Apparently everyone was being detained; it seemed that Odin All Father was not amused at having to have to climb out of his jammies to deal with the rumpus taking place in his dining hall.

After maybe forty-five minutes of silently standing and watching various guards, officials and the odd courtier scurry in and out of Odin's office, Tony was in a worse mood than he had been during the fight. He'd several times attempted to whisper something to Loki, only to be hushed by a grizzled, no-nonsense commander of the guards. All this quiet left him far too much time to brood on what had happened and what was going to happen, and even he admitted to himself, worry a bit about what Odin might say. And besides, he hated that fact that in addition to not talking, no one was allowed to sit while waiting for Odin.

Thor, Tony and Loki were the first ones ushered into what Tony privately referred to as Odin's Petit-Throne-Room. As they were being led away, Tony managed to catch the eye of, and wave jauntily to Loki's recent opponent. Hafji scowled even more as he, his cousin Laut, and several of his kinsmen remained corralled with on the other end of the large Hall. While the Petit-Throne-Room lacked the sweeping, intimidating grandeur of the main throne room, it more than made up for it with the up close and personal intimidation being only being a few yards away from the All Fucker. Who was not happy with Tony at the moment. Or, as it turned out, with any of them, apparently.

"Once the matter had been settled, you insulted him anew by dismissing him as not worthy of even a token nick with your blade," he growled at Loki. Then Odin swiveled to glare at Tony, and growled, "And you, in addition to starting the incident in the first place, you poured fuel on the flames with your insults." And lastly, his glowering attention fastened on his first born, "And you allowed the entire incident to get away from you in the first place."

"Father--"

"Ymir's Balls, Thor!" Odin roared, slamming a white knuckled fist down on the arm of his chair, cutting off whatever Thor had been about to say. The Protector of the Nine Realms was suddenly almost incandescent with rage. "How is it that you think you are ready to be King of Asgard if you cannot cow a provincial into backing down. *Particularly, when he is wrong in the first place!*"

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement.

Tumblr Year of the Comment Crib Sheet!

Simple - "Loved it!", "Too funny", "Thanks for Sharing", "Heeehehehehehe!" - Even just a couple of words (or key smash combos) totally count, and are most appreciated.

Feels - "LMAO!", "Oh my god, this was so sad", "I grinned the entire chapter" - All would be appreciated comments.

Favorite Bit - "X was a great twist", "I did not expect X to happen!", "Whoa. X? Not normally my cup of tea, but you wrote it so well" - Writers love to hear what and why something caught your attention.

Copy/Comment - "(Insert copied line) - I could not believe he actually said that to her! or What the heck? Are these two trying to kill me? or WTF were they thinking! He knows this isn't going to end well! Argggghh. - This is more or less interacting with the characters, while letting the author know what really caught your attentions.

****** Trigger Warnings **** Canon typical violence.**

Chapter 19 - Fixing a problem

Chapter Summary

If you think trying to deal with inter-state issues are bad, try inter-realm ones. O.O
Thor is not the only one who can bring the hammer down.

Chapter Notes

I feel bad for you guys, the Beta comments on this chapter were a hoot! And I was tempted to make changes due to a few of them... but sadly, the judicious application of Skunks as a recommended fix for Tony's problems just didn't make it into this chapter. :D Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes are my bad.

This fic is finished. The last chapter just went off to be beta'd. Yay me!

Oh! And Happy Groundhog Day! Sadly, Phil saw his shadow, but since I am in a southern US state right now, I will cope. Condolences to all my northern latitude readers, no matter which continent they are on.:)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 19 - Fixing a problem

Three days later, Tony was at his wits end, and reduced to clutching his hair and moaning. Over two sleepless nights, he and Jarvis had gone over every contingency they could come up with. But the results were always the same; there was no way Tony could even sell a bit of property to come up with enough money by the end of the cycle to pay all the bills he had coming due. At least not with the deliberate, we have centuries to get it absolutely perfect, way property sales were structured in Asgard.

“I’m a god damned billionaire; it shouldn’t be possible for me to be broke,” he muttered hoarsely, for perhaps the hundredth time.

But he was.

Rubbing the heels of his palms against his tired eyes, Tony dropped his tablet on the couch and lurched to his feet. He was confronted by the same concerned look he’d been getting from Loki since Odin had proclaimed the various punishments for the feast hall fight a few days ago.

Tony scowled, despite knowing it was his own actions that had twisted Odin’s leather knickers, and given him the opening to strike at his independence. And pardon the fuck out of him if that didn’t make Tony just a tiny fucking bit unreasonable... and okay, nauseous.

Tony knew his current panic wasn't Loki's fault. Hell, he'd started the fight that had pissed off Odin. But, Odin's punishment meant that he didn't have access to any funds except his Asgardian ones. And those had recently been depleted paying back Frigga's accounts for the money she had spent funding Loki's incarceration on Earth rather than Asgard. Not that this should have been a problem, Tony had plenty of money scheduled to arrive... It just couldn't arrive when it was supposed to with this fucking 'the-All-Father-is-pissed' embargo in place!

The lack of local funds, coupled with Asgard's contract laws, and their draconian penalties for payment default was the more immediate problem. He had tried to calm down, but frankly... Genius or not, this was not really Tony's area of expertise. Tony was used to just throwing his expert legal team and kick ass CEO at problems like this. Not that either one would be helpful here. His SI lawyers were not experts on Asgardian contract law, something he made a mental note to fix if he didn't end up in debtor prison. And sadly, Pepper's long list of influential people who owed her favors, didn't include many Space Vikings. Hell, he couldn't even whip up a quick invention and sell the rights to it for a quick cash infusion... The ponderous ice of glaciers moved faster than the average Asgard business deal.

It was just so unfair. And okay, being cut off from his Earthgard funds was the most immediate problem. But, right under the panic caused by the possible, but admittedly remote chance of bond slavery as a debtor... Not that Tony didn't think Odin would come to his rescue... For a price. There was also rage at the sheer gall of Odin declaring that Tony was going to have to provide full technical specifications for his arc reactor since they were powering part of the BiFrost reconstruction. Even his fucking lead engineers didn't get to keep detailed plans for the arc reactors. And now Odin wanted a set of them to be put in Asgard's archives? That low grade fear of destitution, coupled with his anger at having someone he frankly hated make a grab for his tech?

Oh hell no!

So Tony paced, bitched, and moaned. And the worst of it was Loki had just sat there and took it, until having said the one thing that hurt worse than all the rest, he ended up toe to toe with the god, the two of them shrieking at each other at the top of their lungs. No longer stricken looking, Loki's normally gorgeous face was twisted into a hideous grimace as they screamed ludicrously petty accusations at each other. But then, Loki just stopped, his jaw jutted forward in that arrogant, 'I am a prince you dull creature' way he had. Unfortunately, it was also Loki's one expression that never failed to make Tony's fingers itch for a big pipe wrench.

Without even realizing what he was doing, Tony's inner turmoil caused him to abruptly spin ninety degrees and yell. "This is all your fucking father's fault!"

Leaping to his own feet, worried concern, finally cracking, under the weight of Tony's relentless bad mood, Loki immediately screamed back, "He's NOT my father!"

"He. Is. NOT. My. Father. They. Are not. My family," Loki snarled, before his voice dropped in to a tone so low and visceral that it made the hair stand up on the back of Tony's neck.

"I am not now... Nor have I ever been a true member of the house of Odin."

The sight of Loki, almost shaking in rage, holding a tightly clenched hand to his chest, was like a knife thrust. And just like that, concern for his god's upset caused Tony's own anger to drain away.

Following Tony's gaze, Loki also dropped his head regarding his strained, white knuckles for a long moment. And then, with visible effort, the god unfolded his long elegant fingers, and

stretching his arm slightly, he stroked the backs of them on Tony's chest. And if those fingers trembled just a bit, it could have been due to the muscles jumping along Loki's neck and jaw.

But then again, it could have been due to something neither he nor his god liked to actually articulate anywhere outside of sex.

Sentiment sucked.

"Anthony," the god continued in low growl, but fortunately one without the harmonics that made mortal hindbrains want to hide. "I am, by Odin's own will, a member of the House of Stark," Loki informed him, his eyes locking on Tony's from beneath knit brows.

Almost in slow motion, Tony took the offered hand gripping it tightly with his own as his other arm reached out to rest briefly on Loki's hip before sliding around his trim waist, drawing Loki into a loose embrace as Loki continued, "You are the head of the House of Stark and I will see Asgard burn before you or our house are further wronged by the Æsir."

"Nobody touches our stuff," Tony declared, voice hard as his hand fisted into the back of Loki's tunic pulling him tighter so he could bury his face against a soft green tunic.

If he wasn't sure that a tenth of what he had been spewing yesterday would have meant his immediate death, Tony would have yelled it at Odin 'Fucking-All Father', not Loki. And maybe also screamed, just a bit at Thor 'All for the greater good Thunderputz'. Who has just stood there like a chastised little kid as Odin finished with him and then turned on Tony. Yeah, greater good, it wasn't like anyone was ever going to take Thor's creations. He was too stupid to have any. Or Odin's either, the bastard hadn't created anything in his freaking long-assed life, he just stole from other people. People like Tony.

And Loki.

And don't even get him started thinking about Frigga, who claimed to be grateful for all the help Tony provided for her son, but was only too willing to throw Tony under the bus at the first disagreement with her dick husband. Not to mention her aiding and abetting Odin all those years as he lied to his supposed son. No. She had no moral high ground either as far as Tony was concerned. And it hadn't been made any better by Loki's intel that Odin had just been waiting for something like this to happen.

"How did you hear that?"

"Tony, I do have spies. And if they couldn't warn me about something that so closely affects my house they would be—"

"I know, looking for another job."

"Well, I was thinking more like seeing which of their relatives were also in Helheim, but..."

All of which was chasing through Tony's head when the arms around him tightened and Loki rumbled in his ear, "You are of course not to worry about the All Father using the threat of debt slavery to get you to make a deal that is not in our best interest."

"You don't know that. Lo--"

"I do know that, Tony," Loki told him. "I have an idea that should solve this."

"What?"

“Something, I have been turning over in my mind for some time now. Not for this, of course, but...” Loki shrugged, pulling back, and glancing down at the papers scattered around Tony. Adjusting both their shirts, he continued, “And I would, of course, have preferred to do a bit more planning. However, even hastily done, it should suffice.”

And with that, Loki lightly kissed Tony’s forehead and turned towards the door.

“Seriously Bambi?” Tony asked his rapidly the retreating god, “Hey, come back here! What idea? Jarvis, what idea is he talking about?”

And as per usual when he was on a roll, Loki simply ignored him, just giving him a reassuring smile before ducking out of the room and vanishing like fucking Houdini.

OoooO

Apparently Tony’s housekeeper Marji was, like his god, one of those people who knew someone who knew someone. And with her having put out the word, two days later, after numerous unsuccessful attempts to run down his sneaky god and demand more information on his little plan, Tony turned his attention to collection of offers he’d recently received for his Jotunheim ore and mineral samples, a few of which were astonishingly rare, making even the small sample amounts that Tony had, quite valuable.

Or at least, he was looking over those offers until a deposit receipt from the exchequers office, for quite a respectable amount of cash, was waved in front of them. Rather, a respectable amount of gold, since this was Asgard after all. And yes, the total of which caused the knot of tension that had been sitting on Tony’s chest for the last few days to finally disappear.

And holding that damn deposit slip, just tight enough that Tony couldn’t take it from him, Loki’s eyes lit up in a way that turned Tony’s thoughts to tension of a different sort.

“Have you been a naughty boy and over extended us, Tony?”

Well, yes. Technically it could be said that Tony had had over extended them. Because, perhaps from a certain point of view, depending on unfettered access to his Earthgardian funds had been a mistake. One that Tony never intended to repeat. However, he was still blaming Odin... Except, what with the way his newly relieved body was perking up and taking notice of the purring tone in Loki’s voice, now was not really the time to be making excuses, or thinking about what a dick the All Father was. Cutting short his mental rant against Odin, he instead focused on the purr in Loki’s voice that never failed to cause a frisson of lust pool right below his belly.

“You could say that,” he admitted, relief mixing with a lot of the blood in his body moving south, leaving Tony feeling more than a bit lightheaded.

“I know I could say that, but would you say that?” Loki asked, crowding closer, looming over Tony with a predatory smirk.

“Ummm, yeah.”

Loki lightly tapped Tony’s cheek with the deposit slip. “And how shall we teach you not to do this again?”

Snuggling closer to his god, a filthy smile curled Tony’s lips as he murmured into Loki’s neck, “Naughty Hair Brush Night?”

“Oh yes,” Loki breathed. “And then, tonight... Or rather tomorrow, since I fully expect you to be

completely ‘tied up’ this evening, I want you to develop plans for internet service for the Golden Circle location of our first Stark Roast Haus. With, of course, a way to link it to the Stark Roasts that we will be opening on our estates, and Jane’s future dower properties."

Tony jerked back to stare wild eyed up at Loki's practically trademarked, psychotic-evil-overlord grin.

“What!?”

OoooO

It had severely rankled his genius, billionaire, former playboy, and philanthropist, that it was Loki who solved their funding difficulties. It had apparently also aggravated his mortal that Loki had managed to free them from Odin’s trickery, and do it in a way that that also laid the foundation for a future strike at the king of Asgard. Not that Tony would have admitted that out loud, but Tony had requested that Jarvis periodically remind him that Loki was terrifyingly scary on the topic of delayed revenge.

And later, that evening, despite his airy assurance that he’d merely moved up the timetable on a business idea he’d been considering, Tony continued to question him, demanding answers and details to the point where Loki reminded his mortal that a gag could be easily be incorporated into the Naughty Hair Brush protocols. This silenced Tony’s demands for information for perhaps five minutes. However, by judicious use of his own mouth, Loki was at last able to turn Tony’s thoughts in quite another direction.

OoooO

Five cycles later, large oafish feet firmly planted themselves just to one side of Loki’s desk. While Thor’s right hand rested on Mjölnir’s handle, his left was bunched upon his hip, and Thor’s pronouncement boomed across Loki’s small construction office like a summer storm rolling down off Mount Baffin.

“Father is upset with you. And me. Because of you.”

A statement indicating that Odin was upset with Loki was, in Loki’s opinion, quite unnecessary. Akin to declaring that Bligesnipes were destructive, or water was wet. Particularly, since upset was Odin’s general state of mind where Loki was concerned. Setting down his stylus, Loki very pointedly did not sigh at being interrupted. Nor did he roll his eyes at Thor’s highly dramatic stance or the oaf using his very best, ‘Hark-and-pay-heed’ voice. Although that last one took quite a bit of effort on Loki’s part, what with the actual thunder that was now sounding in the distance.

So instead of all of the things he would have liked to do or say, Loki fixed a distantly pleasant expression upon his face and said lightly, “Well good morning to you too, Thor. And how was your extended tour of our other realm outposts? I understand that Múspellsheimr is warm this time of year.”

“Loki, Múspellsheimr is always warm no matter what time of year.” Thor’s annoyed cadence was coupled with his best, Odin-on-high-in-a-bad-mood-sowl.

Sadly, however creditable the attempt, it fell far short. Judgmental Odin-ish? No. Disgruntled duckling? Yes.

“Loki, you know this. As I am sure you also know that your holdings are choosing delegates, and creating their own Thing.”

Loki shrugged. “Interestingly enough, Thor, I do know what is going on at my estates. What of it?”

The furrow in Thor’s brow deepened at Loki’s nonchalant reply. A flicker of deeper irritation passed over him before he said, “Your holdings aren’t even all in the same region; their assembly bypasses their local Things. Father is upset.”

Had it not been Loki’s considered opinion, that the way the stars shone also upset Odin, he might have cared about this. Or probably not.

“Nonsense.” Loki’s dismissal flicked out as though shooing away a fly. “My steadings will very much be attending the local meetings. What the All Father is no doubt concerned about, is that my two representatives, one male, and one female, are now going to be chosen by secret ballot, rather than public acclaim.” Lack of public acclaim making easier for people to vote for someone besides the current fair-haired child, Loki was very interested to see who would be chosen. “And more importantly, by being versed on what is also going on in my other properties; my citizens can choose to work together for the betterment of their combined steadings.” Loki favored Thor with a wolfish grin. “All as part of the greater good of Asgard, you understand.”

Thor huffed.

“Primarily, for the greater good of your holdings.”

Glancing down, as if ready to return to the work in front of him, Loki watched Thor out of the corner of his eye while saying offhandedly, “One of the items they are working on, for the greater good of Asgard, is expanding the acceptance of interconnected information systems, for uses other than that of business or central government. And happily, by meeting at their local Stark Roast and using the communication systems available there, this benefits not only them, but also drops gold into the purses of Stark and your Lady Jane.”

Ignoring Thor’s annoyed huff, Loki continued, “I know you probably haven’t bothered to speak with your exchequer about it, however, your investment on her behalf is already projected to make her bride gift account quite a tidy amount of gold.” He, Tony, and Jane were all feeling pretty smug about not only how popular the new concept already was, but also at how eager the average Æsir was for something to do that didn’t involve smiting someone.

Loki gifted Thor with a sharp edged smile. “I understand that the Lady Jane, and Tony, are already making plans to create Midgardian style programs to teach younglings, who might not have the opportunity to be exposed to classes on science and innovation.”

Not that innovation was much of a concern in the Æsir curriculum. For that matter, neither were the higher sciences. Unless, of course, said youngling was born into the select few Æsir families that were, since Buri’s time, tasked with pure scholarship. And honestly, Loki was very much looking forward to the dismay of the Dwarfs’ artificers when they found out exactly what kind of mechanical instruction was going to be given, practically for free, to any Æsir youngling who was interested in it. That would certainly set more than one beard on fire.

“When I bought the shares for Jane as part of her bride price, you told me they were going to be for an alternative gathering place to taverns, that even younglings could enter,” Thor gritted through tightly clenched teeth. “You didn’t mention they were going to have interWeb connections, and promote sedition.”

Shooting Thor an outwardly concerned glance, that purposely did not quite concealed his inner glee, Loki practically purred, “Did I, or did I not, tell you that Jane and Tony’s coffee houses will plan many activities that would interest the average Ás? And that they would be activities that did

not involve drunken brawling?” Loki cast his eyes up while his countenance assumed a look of false pensiveness. “Yes. Yes, I do believe I mentioned that. And in fact, I understand that in addition to an adult essay contest on how the collected steadings could be improved, Stark Roast is also sponsoring children’s story contests.” That being one of Loki’s own ideas, not that he was going to tell Thor that. “I believe the first topic will be Bestla, Future Queen of Asgard.”

Thor’s poorly concealed look of horror would have been laughable, if it hadn’t on an entirely different level enraged him. He would have to remember to rope his not quite brother into helping Darcy judge the illustration contest she was planning for the winning story. Having Thor review art work depicting his Jotun grandmother as a child would be glorious. However, that was a surprise best saved, and savored, on another day.

Thor rubbed his forehead a moment, as if trying to erase a sudden headache. “Loki, I have seen the strife this InterWeb creates on Midgard, and—”

“And what, Thor? Stark Roast also streams a different movie each week for the younglings. They get to watch and discuss a Midgardian movie, while their parents discuss items of interest with others in their community. All without drunken brawling, and while drinking something besides ale. How can this not be a good thing?”

“Well, of course it is, but--”

“But what? This week they are showing Lilo and Stitch. Was that not a favorite of yours? And I understand the Harry Potter series is starting soon.” And no, Loki wasn’t still snickering over the minor uproar that How to Train your Dragon had caused the week before.

If anything, rather than comforted, Thor looked more pained. “Still, this InterWeb is oft times a source of slander and unrest on Midgard, I am not sure it would be wise to introduce it here.”

“Don’t be simple, Thor. Despite you, Tony, Jane, and Darcy, liking the wretched stuff, it is going to take more than a bitter beverage, and some baked goods to get people to patronize Stark Roast. Your future subjects are used to honey mead for crying out loud. Even with Midgardian hot chocolate and Álfheimr’s sparkling teas, entertainment and engagement are necessary to get people in the door. Besides, we have paid for a business use license, so our using the communication network does not require your approval or permission. And, I might point out that all of this information was in the business proposal I presented to you and Jane. She was certainly well aware of what was being planned. How is it that you were not equally informed? Please tell me you at least read it.”

Thor huffed at that, his tone losing the whining under note, allowing aggrieved exasperation to take over. “Of course I read it.”

Although from the way Thor’s eyes refused to meet his, Loki, suspected that Thor had merely skimmed the document, relying on Loki to make sure it was legal, Tony to make sure it was profitable, and Jane to make sure it wouldn’t ruffle too many feathers. Sadly for Thor, his Jane, like Tony and Loki, had no desire to spend a millennium living in an unchanging, unruffled, Asgard. And if they could ruffle feathers, promote change, and make money? Well then what was Thor’s complaint?

“You intend to eventually spread them throughout the entire realm, do you not?” Thor asked, interrupting Loki’s involuntary musings on all the lovely chaos in Asgard’s future.

“Well, I know Jane is looking to eventually expand from her dower properties to all of the estates and towns you control.”

“No doubt,” Thor said glumly. “But, Sif has several times visited Stark Roast, and she thinks the activities that are being used to increase patronage are also fostering disruptive influences.”

“Of course she does,” Loki again waved a dismissive hand. “If it involves me or Tony she would.” Not that that wasn’t exactly what he was paying two highly priced psychologists, who had spent years studying Asgardian mindsets, to promote. Hopefully, in an orderly, and socially responsible manner.

“Loki...” Thor’s voice took on an admonishing tone.

“No, Thor. Listen.” Lips thinning, Loki folded his hands in front of him, and willing the great clod to just once in his life really pay attention, he pinned him with a steely eyed stare. “As the future King of Asgard, forget the disruptive part, which is completely unimportant.”

“But--”

“No,” Loki interrupted, tossing out his hand in hard emphasis. “When you are talking nine realms, something is always going to be disruptive. The word you should be concerned about is influence. Unless...” Loki raised a brow, “Do you plan to spend the whole of your rein kowtowing to the Jarls, and your advisors trying to get them to use their power to sway public opinion?”

“Of course not.”

“Then you will need a way to solidify your influence with the whole of Asgard. You are not Odin, you will inherit his throne, but you will not inherit the fear of reprisal he spent so many millennia instilling in the crown council, nobles, and others. They won’t automatically do your bidding unless you have a way of bypassing their influence. And the other realms will not listen to you unless Asgard stands together. Anthony knows how to create a system you can use to promote your will, and I know how to get people to pay attention to issues that matter to Asgard. It is basically what I have been trained my whole life to do, is it not?”

Amazingly, Thor paused a moment, looking rather thoughtful.

Or, constipated. With Thor it was sometimes difficult to tell. Suppressing the urge sigh, Loki waited for him to mull the argument over. It took a while. When Thor did speak, it was haltingly, as if he was by some miracle actually carefully weighing his words.

“I grant your points,” Thor said at last, “however; I think in that case, such a service should belong to the crown.”

“Indeed?” Loki asked, furrowing his brow as if he was seriously considering this point of view. “So you will speak to the All Father about allocating the money for the hardware and infrastructure. Not to mention the actual information gathering, and display. Oh, and also implementation, training, and creating adoption enticements?”

By the time Loki had finished questions, Thor looked vaguely horrified, as well anyone might, being asked to request funding for something that was, in the All Father’s opinion, strictly unnecessary. Loki managed, barely, to contain a bark of laughter at the way Thor’s voice went from low pitched indignation, to high pitched protest. “Loki! That could cost a fortune. I don’t think I would be able to convince father the funds would be well spent!”

“Then you need to leave it to Anthony. And by the time you need it as King, it will be ready for you.”

Shoulders sagging, Thor groaned, “Sif maintains that this will not end well.”

Hiding the utter joy welling up in him at what the future held in store for the Lady Sif, Loki pasted on his blandest expression and murmured comfortingly, “Well, I wouldn’t worry too much about Sif. I predict that she will soon have concerns other than the nattering of coffee house patrons to occupy her.”

Thor eyed Loki apprehensively, “Loki, what have you done?”

“I? I have done nothing.”

“Uh-huh.”

“I assure you, Thor. I have done nothing, I am planning nothing.” Loki said with a small sad smile, as if injured that Thor should question him. And indeed, every syllable he uttered on the subject simply dripped with truth and sincerity, because it was the truth and he was quite sincere. Thor remained suspicious. Which, he supposed, wasn’t too unusual; after all the great oaf had been his brother for a thousand years.

“So, what are you going to do?”

“Your precious shield maiden need have no fear of any action of mine. But I am quite sure that with the way Sif finds fault with everyone in general, and me in particular, never doubt that she will soon have something else to complain about.” He shrugged, and shot Thor a sharp glance. “It is, after all, her nature to be displeased, is it not?”

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement. If you'd like to leave something, but struggle with what to say, see the endnotes in last chapter for a crib sheet. :D

****** Trigger Warnings **** None that I could see.**

Chapter 20 - A Man out of Time in More Ways Than One

Chapter Summary

Tony gets a call trans-realm call for help. Kinda.

Chapter Notes

Remember - This is a Age of Ultron/CIVIL WAR free fic. Those did not occur in this fic.

Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes are my bad.

See Trigger Warnings in End Notes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 20 – A Man out of Time in More Ways Than One

Bars of bright sunlight marched unnoticed across the labs floor. Not much sunlight mind you, since the first basement lab was only about two foot above grade, which meant the windows were narrow slits up by the ceiling. But narrow or not, the bars of light marked the passage of several hours as Tony struggled to wrap his mind around a concept that couldn't possibly exist but did. Or at least he did until Jarvis completely and totally screwed his concentration.

"I am sorry to interrupt you, Sir," Jarvis said apologetically. "However, Prince Loki has an urgent message from Heimdall for you. It appears that Captain Rogers is in quite a bit of trouble."

Tony had been working on a series of exercises that one of Loki's old tutors had given him, concerning the theories behind Asgardian forms of energy production. Of course, since he had been working on these problems non-stop since the old bastard had left yesterday afternoon, it took Tony a few seconds to bring his attention back to the present.

"What?" He rubbed his eyes tiredly, "Jarvis, run that by me again, would ya?"

He was no less confused after Jarvis had repeated the message. Scrubbing both hands through his hair, he peered up at the closest camera, and asked in a puzzled tone, "Jay, since when does Heimdall pass messages to Loki for me? For that matter, since when does Heimdall tell anybody but Odin what's happening on Earth, you know, the place which they insist on calling Midgard. Honestly I think the people living in that place has the right to name their own place and other people, like, Space Vikings, should respect and more importantly use that name."

"I'm sure I couldn't say Sir, but as Captain Rogers is a friend and shield brother of Thor's, perhaps he keeps an eye on him." Jarvis said, simply ignoring the rest of what he no doubt thought was irrelevant babbling from his creator.

Which Tony supposed could be true, heavens knew the Bro-in-law thought the world of Steve. And not just because Steve was one of the people who could keep up with Thor when they went barhopping. Although it had to be a major attraction. Hell, even as enhanced as Tony's metabolism was these days, he couldn't begin to keep up with the blonde duo when they got their drink on. Although he did think it was cheating that Steve could not get drunk at all.

Tony was less than graceful as he grabbed his cold cup of coffee and stiffly climbed out of his chair. Not moving for several hours would do that to you. Tony yawned and stretched until he was balanced on the balls of his feet, and then bent backward so far he heard his back crack.

"Sir? As this is an unusual event perhaps it might be considered an emergency," Jarvis chided.

"Yeah. Whatever. Do me a favor, will ya? Get the stealth armor ready," Tony said swinging his arms out and rolling his shoulders to work a few more kinks out of his body. While he wasn't getting any older, he still really had to quit spending twenty-four to thirty-six hours at a pop working. He needed to start remembering that he had much more time available to him now. Just like he and Loki had time to work on their relationship, Tony also had time to learn all the knowledge that was now available to him... without ignoring the needs of his body, or his lovely, if slightly psychotic, spouse.

Preparing to head down to his suit lab, Tony paused to open up a small refrigerator tucked under one of his work counters. After grabbing a bottle of cold water, he dipped his hand into the bowl sitting on top the counter and grabbed an Asgardian army energy bar. Fortunately for Tony, Space Viking energy bars, which were the calorie equivalent of a full meal, were freaking bite sized morsels. So Tony was able to finish eating, and get several slugs of water, before his stealth suit had fully encased him. Loki wasn't happy about him relying on the emergency energy nuggets for sustenance, but he had ordered that Tony's snack bowl be kept stocked with them. It was a clear acknowledgement that despite the fact that they had a live-in cook, Tony was going to miss meals on a semi-regular basis.

Since Odin hated Tony using the suits more than he hated his StarkCycle, Tony made sure to trigger stealth mode before he exited his lab's private courtyard. According to the great and powerful Odin, (*think great and powerful Oz, but with one fewer eye and more anger management issues*), only feet, horses and the very occasional sky skiff were approved methods of getting around inside the Golden Circle. So Tony did try to keep his use of the suit at least on the down low. As far as his electric motorcycle was concerned, it met the renewable, quiet and unobtrusive criteria for travel inside 'Shiny Loop', so Odin could just blow him on that one.

Not that Tony gave two shits what Odin thought on any given day with the suit, but he was in a hurry and didn't have time right now to deal with a cranky father-in-law scrambling a troop of Einherjar to haul Tony into the throne room for a chat. So Tony waited until he was halfway down the bridge before he dove under it, turning off his suit's stealth mode as soon as he was out of sight of any nosy onlookers. Or big black birds.

"Prinsgemalen Stark," Heimdall boomed once he had landed, "Your Avenger shield brother, Captain Rogers, is in great danger and in need of your immediate assistance."

"Sure. Assistance. I can do that. We waiting for Thor or what?"

"Unfortunately Prince Thor is on Muspelheim mediating a dispute they are having with Niflheim. Your captain was lured into a trap. He was severely injured while escaping and is currently hiding in a basement." Heimdall chivied Tony into position. "An alarm was sounded and numerous troops are now hunting for him, doubtless with the intent to do him great harm. There is no time to recall Prince Thor, even if it would be possible for him to leave at this moment, he could not get there in

time as they are getting very close to Captain Rogers' hiding place. You will need to remove him very quickly."

And Heimdall wasn't kidding. The minute Tony materialized he had to hit his thrusters to avoid being shot. It was several tricky minutes before Tony could get the troops in the nearby area to disperse long enough for him to enter the building that Heimdall had described to him.

"Bucky was never here, it was a trap," Steve mumbled for the sixtieth time as Tony blasted an opening in the side of the building. Tony wondered for the sixtieth time, what the hell Steve had been doing, going on a covert mission by himself.

"Don't worry about it buddy, I'll have you safely out of here in no time," Tony said only moments before realizing he should've kept his mouth shut. Or at least knocked on wood and said '*in the hour that it may be*' or whatever it took to make that Urðres bitch happy. It was, he acknowledged, becoming increasingly difficult not to believe in her and her sister Norns. Particularly when you knew that your not-father-in-law had once had a personal audience with them.

Anyhow, coincidence or him pissing off Urðres, Tony, with Steve stumbling behind him, had barely cleared the building before they were attacked. There were enough projectiles fired at them that only the additional blocking provided by Tony's Iron Man suit kept Steve from being further injured by a barrage that his shield was too small to fully deflect. Unfortunately, one of the small rockets hit a waist joint at a really, really bad angle.

"Tony were you hit?" Steve yelled, as Tony lurched from the impact and pain.

"Shit!" Spinning, Tony snatched up a horrified Steve, and immediately took to the skies. Originally, he had figured once they were high enough to be out of range, he would fly all nice and slow. Or rather slow as it pertained to Tony suits, and only until they got somewhere where he could call for more traditional transportation. Unfortunately, he had not expected the opposition to scramble any fighter jets.

"Tony," Steve groaned, warning him unnecessarily, "planes." Despite his pain, Tony rolled his eyes. Like his sensors wouldn't show what was coming up behind him.

Oh hell yeah, even damaged, he could turn his suit invisible. That was not a problem. The problem was... he and Loki had refined the runes making the suit invisible, until they only affected the suit. While this had been a big help when he was working on, and repairing the damn thing, what with it no longer turning his testing equipment invisible, the reality bitch slap now was of course that it didn't turn anything he touched invisible now that he wanted it to. And that was a problem what with him carrying around a guy wearing a red white and blue outfit bright enough to be visible from outer fucking space.

Tony briefly toyed with the idea of shooting the jets down, but he was uncomfortably aware of the fact that right now, Iron Man was not exactly acting under the umbrella of any acknowledged legal authority, his Asgardian ambassador status notwithstanding. While his suit had been capable of driving away and taking down their previous attackers with less than lethal force, there was no way in hell he could get a plane out of the air without killing someone.

Besides, he couldn't even be sure who Steve had been fighting with, and he was willing to bet the super solider hadn't checked in with the local police when he arrived. So, the planes very well could have been sent by the local government in response to reports of terrorist fractions fighting each other.

Fuck.

Once this was over, Tony was so going to have Snape enchant him an invisibility cloak. Nothing fancy really, just a little something that he could stuff in this suit's storage pocket, in case a situation like this ever happened again. "Hang on Steve," Tony warned a split second before abruptly turning and diving towards the ground.

An unwilling groan was forced out of his passenger. A worryingly heartfelt groan from someone who rarely acknowledged pain. While the planes could move faster than Tony could with an injured passenger, his suit was still far more maneuverable than they were, even if the muscles in his lower back were writhing on the side that had taken damage.

"Seriously buddy, no matter what, you need to hang on tight," Tony told him urgently, and then struck by an unpleasant thought he continued. "Oh. And please try not to throw up on the suit; it takes forever to clean the puke out of the joints." That was something Tony knew from painful experience. Landing heavily, ignoring the pained hiss from his passenger, and trying to keep his own inaudible, Tony flipped up his visor screaming up to the heavens. "Heimdall! Beam us up NOW!"

"Tony?" Steve questioned with just the slightest bit of wobble in his voice.

"Now, Heimdall! Now!" Tony shouted. "If those damn jets manage to get turned around while you're playing your little fuck fuck stall game with me, you're going to be the one explaining to Odin what—"

As the Bi-Frost poured them back into normal space, Tony wondered if Steve's super serum was going to be enough to keep him from upchucking on abrupt intergalactic wormhole trip.

"Prinsgemalen Stark," Heimdall's deep voice rumbled as Tony tightened his grip to allow a very shaky Steve to catch his balance. "Midgardians are not permitted—"

"Yeah, I know." Tony opened his visor and held up a finger in a request for a moment of silence. "Jarvis?"

"Sir, Prince Loki saw the flare and has already sent the work skiff to pick you up. I will inform him that you have brought Captain Rogers back with you as well."

Tony grinned and then winked at Heimdall, "Look, it was beam us aboard or explain to Prince Thor how his favorite Earthgardian shield brother, not to mention his favorite brother-in-law got killed. Honestly, I'm not trying to make waves. If you could just try not to mention it to anybody, until Thor gets back we should be okay. And I think I can see my way to perhaps a dozen cases of whatever you're drinking next time I go home. Who knows, a few more incidents like this and you could open up a Midgardian liquor distributorship up here."

Heimdall didn't roll his eyes, but he still managed to convey that he thought Tony was more trouble than he was worth and full of bullshit to boot. Tony was torn between hanging around a bit, and placating Heimdall – which he totally could do, since no matter what he pretended, scary dude found him amusing – and finding out how badly Steve was injured. Because seriously, Steve was not normally the kind of guy who would slide down to the floor and sit all hunched up on a step.

"Prince Consort—"

"Big guy, I am seriously sorry that you had to do this, but I'm sure that Thor will straighten everything out, and you know what? In addition to the afore-mentioned tip, I'll even throw in an extra couple of cases of rum. And perhaps even a box of umbrella stirrers, and a couple of cases of pineapples so you can hollow them out and make those stupid fruity drinks you're so fond of."

Patting Heimdall's arm absently, Tony motioned towards the winded, disheveled Capt'n Spangles. "Loki is sending a work skiff with one of his guards for us. Steve here can ride in the back and no one will even know he's here. And I hope I don't have to mention this, but you did call me, let's not forget that."

Kvasir and Nerthus, who seemed to be turning into Tony's personal guards, helped him load Steve into the back of the work skiff. Before climbing in himself, Tony raised a brow in inquiry and glanced back at Heimdall one last time.

"Go," Heimdall intoned with that ridiculously deep voice of this. And while golden dude would probably deny it to his dying day, Tony saw the corners of the giant's lips twitch momentarily into a small smile.

Arms folded protectively across his middle, mussed and scuffed to a fare thee well. Steve peered up at Tony incredulously. "You pay for intergalactic transport with cases of liquor?"

Shrugging, Tony smiled at his friend. "Well. Yeah."

"Isn't that kind of cheap?" Steve asked, unnecessarily bracing himself as the skiff smoothly started to move. "Not that I'm complaining, since he just saved us, but still."

Tony removed his suit's helmet and settled back with a groan. "You know, I have wondered about that a time or two myself. Not that I'm complaining either. I think it just that Heimdall is like a public servant, and unless someone tries to bribe him to go somewhere all sneaky... Which few people ever do, since the big guy reports directly to Odin." Pausing a moment, Tony shook off his right gauntlet, so he could wipe damp bangs from his face. "Anyhow I don't think anyone ever does more than thank the guy. I mean, after all, as far as the Asgardians are concerned, he's just doing his job. The same job he's been doing the last millennia or three."

Of course, the thought of doing the same job for thousands of years was something that made Tony shudder; but he supposed the people in Asgard were used to it. "Anyhow." He said gifting the blonde sitting across from him with a wry smile, "I make sure to toss him a present every time anyone from my house uses the Bi-Frost."

OoooO

Despite being in what Tony judged was some pretty severe pain, the artist in Steve was enraptured by the architecture of Starkhaus' main courtyard. "This building has wonderful proportions Tony," he said, stepping slowly down from the skiff.

"Yeah..." Tony rolled his eyes. "Not really my style, but Lo likes it. His not-mother helped me find it for him."

"Not-mother?" Steve's brows creased questioningly, but he refused to take his eyes off the graceful archway framing the main door.

"Don't ask." Tony advised, fending off Kvasir as he attempted to help Tony out of the enclosed transport cube and waving Steve towards the other bodyguard, Nerthus, who was pulling open the front door open for them.

"I'm going to get you in trouble by being here, aren't I?" Steve said casting his eyes around the large, intricately carved stone entry hall.

"Naw, if it was going to be that much trouble Golden Eye would have just beamed you back to Earth." Tony replied, easily dismissing that concern. "It's all good. And if it isn't, as soon as Point

Break gets here, he'll make it all good." He smiled as a shadow of doubtful skepticism washed over Steve's face. "And if for some reason he can't, I'll just stick Brat God on the problem. He'll know who has a shallowly buried body that we can use as leverage to make this go away."

Steve peered around the large room as if making sure that Loki wasn't present. "Loki? I thought Natasha said he was still a prisoner here?" Not finding the *Scourge of New York* hiding behind the newel post, Steve limped into the foyer. As Tony pressed a few carvings to reveal a small elevator that had been hidden behind a set of decorative panels Steve came and stood beside him.

"Yeah. But he's still Loki." Tony smirked, as the door closed and the elevator smoothly started to rise. "And since you were last here for the wedding, he has apparently reactivated quite the spy network. A little something he'd set up years ago when he was being groomed to be the Thor's chief advisor, I think. Or maybe just something he used to do to piss Odin off." Tony paused thoughtfully for a moment. "Maybe both. At any rate, trust me. If there is a way to make this go away, Loki will find it."

OoooO

Rather than go back down to his lab and use a peeler, Tony shucked his suit using the integrated release mechanisms. Twisting, he was sourly examining a large angry red bruise just above his right buttock, when a concerned Loki entered the room. Several hours before his normal scheduled return.

"Lo?"

"I was told that the suit had taken damage and you were moving stiffly."

"Jarvis?" Tony called out peevishly as strong hand turned him and ran lightly over the affected area. "Didn't I tell you not to worry Rudolf?"

"Indeed you did, Sir," the AI responded peevishly. "However, as I have informed you, despite your most recent coding changes, while unable to access physical aspects in the main house area, Janis is still piggybacking on my data gathering sensors. And, I do not have overrides on her communication capabilities." Tony rolled his eyes, biting back a caustic comment, because honestly it wouldn't do a bit of good.

An equally peevish Loki left off glaring at Tony to share his happiness with the AI. "Nor will you get them until I am sure that you can be trusted to inform me properly when there is a problem," Loki snapped. Finished with his initial examination, Loki began towing Tony over toward their bathing room, insisting that he strip completely and lie face down on the towel draped massage table by the window alcove.

"Not that having you rub oily hands all over me wouldn't be fun, but I was kinda hoping to take a shower," Tony protested feebly, as Loki draped a folded towel over his ass.

"Were you now?"

"Since you're home early, you could join me you know. We could—" Tony broke off abruptly at the sound of the doors opening. Turning away from the floor to ceiling archway, and the panoramic view in front of him, Tony caught a brief glimpse of Shay, the second housemaid carrying a large covered tray. He turned back to his view as she sat the tray somewhere behind him, and then quickly exited the room. Hearing the door click closed Tony had just opened his mouth to renew his offer for some sudsy fun when his rat bastard partner, without warning, right above his right ass cheek, placed a large, wet, freezing gel pack.

No matter how much Tony loved tall, dark and bat-shit crazy, he could not deny that Loki was a more than bit of a sadist some days.

And no what Loki might say, he had not let loose a high, metal-piercing, girly shriek of dismay.

OoooO

Before they went down to dinner, Tony and a still slightly miffed Jarvis had brought Loki up to speed on the background of Steve's hunt for Bucky. And thanks to the efforts of his very efficient housekeeper, Steve was up and about as if nothing had ever happened. It was amazing what a healing stone, a good lunch, and a short nap could do to get a super soldier back in, if not tip top shape, then pretty damn close to it.

However, during the course of the evening, besides welcoming Steve to Starkhaus, and assuring him that he was welcome to stay as long as he wanted, Loki hadn't much to say. Apparently, his god was content to merely observe the super soldier as he and Tony talked. While they had never argued during the times their paths had crossed on earth, neither had Loki made friends with Rogers. Even if Loki did get along better with Steve than he did with either Clint or Natasha, that wasn't really saying much.

"What the hell were you doing in Lithuania by yourself?" Tony asked after Shay had deposited the last platter of food on the dinner table. With an openly admiring glance at Captain Spangles, and an emphatic wave of the hand from Loki, she left closing the doors behind her.

Bemused, Steve tore his attention away from the now closed door and sighed. "Tony, I have checked out hundreds," he shook his blonde head ruefully, "no thousands, of leads over the last decade looking for Bucky. At a certain point I just can't justify using Avengers or government resources as backup. Particularly since they are almost always dead ends."

Pushing a platter of sliced beef closer to the soldier, Tony said, "So what? You just wander around Europe as a tourist? One who just happens to have a garishly bright suit tucked into their second bag?"

Steve smiled, helping himself to several slices of meat, before taking and ripping apart a fragrant seven-grain roll and slathering it with butter. "Pretty much," he replied. Then taking a large bite of the now buttered bread, he let a small, contented sigh escape as he chewed.

Knowing how hungry the super soldier had to be, Tony decided to give Steve a few minutes to eat before he started asking more questions.

"I can afford it, you know," Steve said after a few minutes of steady eating. Smiling as Loki pushed a plate of glazed ham and sweet potato slices a little closer towards him, he continued the conversation that had started earlier. "With the merchandising deals you and Howard put into place." He laughed ruefully, not looking at Tony, instead staring down at his plate. "You know, all those years, I never touched a dime of it. I thought it was wrong to make money off '*Captain America*'. So it just sat there, accumulating." Steve shook his head, looking up from under his brows at Tony.

"Until you decided that it could fund your search without someone else footing the bill," Tony observed. He glanced over at *Prince I Need My Own Money*. Who merely cocked an eyebrow at him as if to say, *See? It's not just me.*

They were almost finished eating when the Thor arrived. After assuring Steve that he had already spoken with both Heimdall and Odin about Steve's presence in Asgard, Thor proceeded to scoot

his grumbling brother over, and slide a chair in beside him. Despite the fact that he was sitting at a table with both Steve and Thor, Tony still managed to get a piece of the apple crumble pie being served for dessert.

His god ran interference for him.

OoooO

“Thor,” Loki said quietly later that evening, while Tony and the Captain were discussing the quality of intelligence that Natasha, and Coulson slipped him. This was most likely wanting in Loki’s opinion. “If Captain Rogers has a picture of this Winter Soldier, or rather, this James, as the Captain calls him, you could order Heimdall to find him.”

“Loki, Heimdall answers to our father, not me.”

“Your father,” Loki retorted automatically, earning himself equally automatic eye roll from Thor. “Try not to be ridiculous, Thor, how many times when you were still a wet behind the ears pup did Heimdall disobey the All Father’s commands for you? And now? When you are the crown prince, and will soon be king? He would be a fool not to do you such an easily accomplished favor.”

As per usual, Thor looked at him like a buck in the path a bilgesnipe. But then, also as usual, once the idea that finally bored through his thick blond skull, he enthusiastically proposed the plan to Captain Rogers. Oh, he knew that eventually Thor would get around to telling people that the idea had originally come from Loki. However, normally by the time he mentioned it, most people had firmly paired the idea with Thor in their minds. Loki sighed internally, but comforted himself with memories of all the times Thor had been his unwitting stalking horse for ideas that would never have been accepted if he had proposed them. He supposed it was like that saying on Midgard, you have to take the good with the bad.

“Can he do that?” Rogers had asked Thor, hope warring against possible disappointment, as he glanced at Tony for confirmation that such a thing might be possible.

“It is not certain, but—” Thor hedged, most likely because even though he was sure Heimdall could find the Captain’s missing friend, he didn’t want Steve to be disappointed if it took a while.

“Probably,” Tony shrugged. “Hell, it only took him fifteen minutes to find that Loki had been moved to the hospital after Doom had attacked my tower. Of course, that was over a three day period. And, if you listen to Heimdall complain, he has centuries of practice trying to find out what Pinky and the Brain here were up to.” He grinned, gesturing towards the two brothers with his thumb. “Even when they were trying to keep it on the down-low.”

“Still...” Rogers breathed, his eyes unfocused, clearly caught up with the idea that he might actually have an untapped avenue to find his friend after all the years he has been looking.

“And, if Heimdall finds him,” not that Loki thinks he won’t, but he doesn’t want to get the Captain’s hopes up too high. “He can drop you, Thor, and Anthony right down to where he is,” Loki continued, knowing how much that idea would also appeals to the soldier. After all, according to the tales he told at dinner, Rogers had just missed finding his friend several times over the years. This Bucky person had repeatedly slipped away before Rogers could get to the location he’d been spotted at.

A short time later, armed with pictures from his phone and some that Tony had printed out from his father’s files, Thor and the Captain went to go talk to Heimdall.

Loki sent several messages of his own, one of them being to Marji informing her that, much to his joy, they might have company for several days.

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement. If you'd like to leave something, but struggle with what to say, see the endnotes in chapter 18. :D

****** Trigger Warnings **** Canon Typical Violence.**

Chapter 21 - Winter Friends are Friends Forever

Chapter Summary

What was lost, has now been found... Whether it wanted to be or not.

Chapter Notes

Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes are mine.

See Trigger Warnings in End Notes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 21 - Winter Friends are Friends Forever

Heimdall found Sergeant Barnes, four days later.

Loki was delighted that the warrior had been found so quickly, particularly since the super soldier and, quite frequently, Thor had been spending every day loitering in his construction office just at the end of the Bi-Frost. Rogers sitting out there quietly fretting had been bad enough for Loki to endure. Thor heartily, and loudly, trying to distract him had been torture.

"I cannot retrieve you if you are surrounded by enemies." Heimdall intoned a short time later, his deep, bass voice repeating a warning that he had issued numerous times over the centuries.

Rogers tensely nodded his understanding, just as Loki rolled his eyes and retorted sharply, "Oh, please. It's Midgard. It's not like you couldn't take out dozens of Midgardians if you needed to, no matter what weapons they had. Note that I said *dozens*, plural. Besides, it's doubtful that Thor would be standing to the side idly watching you defend Asgard single handedly." Not, of course, even mentioning that Loki and his three guards would be at hand to assist, even if Tony was still en route. But he supposed that after more than a millennium, the warning phrase came as natural as breathing to Heimdall. Pompous, rum guzzling windbag that he was.

"True," Heimdall begrudgingly agreed, studiously ignoring both Loki's mildly disgusted expression and the reluctant grin tugging at the corners of Thor's mouth.

"Then don't even start," Loki snapped as he turned towards Thor, waving his hands, much as if he was shooing away an annoyingly frolicsome puppy. "Thor, take the Captain, and find his friend. If you need help, Heimdall can bring Tony to you. Otherwise--"

"Be of strong of heart, my friend," Thor interrupted, clapping Steve bracingly on the back. "We will soon find your Sergeant Barnes."

Not that Loki thought the Captain looked the least bit disheartened. However, upon reflection, he did almost look apprehensive. As Loki pondered what might be so troubling to the Captain that it

overrode the excitement he should be feeling at getting his friend back, a column of light shot up into the sky and the trio disappeared. After he came to himself, he contacted Tony, who complained at length that he'd been unceremoniously woken, and was getting tired of not having any warning that he had to suit up. Additionally, while it was true that he was now awake, ***thank you very much***, did Loki actually expect him to suit up without coffee. More complaints and a warning that it might take a few more minutes to get his damn eyes to focus followed.

Murmuring soothing nothings, Loki ended the call, absently noting that he and his guards were still the only ones on the bridge. Loki looked around a moment, wondering *why* they were still alone. The time he'd wasted listening to Tony whine should have been more than enough time for Heimdall to have returned from dropping off Thor and the Captain.

Enough time, that Loki had decided he might have to fish a small mirror out of his pocket. Heimdall not returning immediately to his post was enough of a potential disaster that Loki had to at least consider inter-realm scrying. Listening to the sound of Tony's armor in the distance, he weighed courting a possibly unnecessarily debilitating headache, against Odin's wrath if he had to mount a rescue for his gatekeeper without knowledge of what had occurred to make it necessary. Fortunately, before he had to make a decision on the best course of action, light roared down from the heavens, depositing four figures on the bridge.

Three of them were locked in a fierce struggle.

OoooO

Grumpy from being woken up from his nap, Tony was less than pleased to be informed that, as per Loki, he had had ten minutes to wake up, suit up, and be on his way to the Bi-Frost. If it weren't for the fact that pissing off Loki by ignoring him would mean that Loki would return the favor plus interest, Tony would have had Jarvis tell Loki to fuck off.

Never a good idea.

"Jay, put a time-delayed, self-inflating collar pillow on my future project list, will ya?" Tony said blearily, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, and drool from his cheek.

"Of course Sir. Although I might point out that most people manage to sleep on surfaces other than stainless steel, and perhaps that would be a more sensible solution. After all, you already have a bed."

Whatever.

According to Jarvis, it seemed that Thor and their house guest were already en route to Earth. Not that Tony had seen much of Steve for the last few days, what with him and Thor camping out at the Rainbow Bridge, and not incidentally inconveniencing Loki and his work crews. Fortunately, Loki decided to check up on him, i.e. make sure he was actually moving, so Tony had someone besides Jarvis to vent to while he was trying to gather himself enough to get suited up.

Deactivating stealth mode once he was out over the water, Tony had almost reached Loki and his guards when the Bi-Frost roared down, leaving four new figures on the bridge. Three of them scrabbled around a lot more than any sane person should while on a bridge with no railings.

"Thor! Be careful! Don't hurt him!" Steve yelled, repeatedly trying to restrain his dark haired friend.

Tony was glad to see that one of Loki's guards was insistent on pulling him back away from the

fight, while the other two took up protective positions on either side of him.

“Jarvis, have Janis scramble that safety skiff out here pronto,” Tony ordered, landing between Loki’s group and Heimdall. Because there is no way he wants flailing bodies and people shoving each other anywhere near his Trickster on *this* damn bridge.

Motioning Loki to stay put, he received a peeved glower as a reward for his concern. Ignoring Loki’s acid glare, Tony sidled up to stand beside Heimdall, wincing in sympathy when the Sergeant, currently trapped in Steve’s iron grip, lifted both heavily booted feet to kick Thor in the chest.

“He seems a bit upset.”

“Indeed,” Heimdall agreed sourly, as the black clad Barnes broke his metal arm free from Steve’s grip, and twisted until he could wrap it around the Super Soldier’s neck. “Apparently, he was preparing an assault on his enemies when we arrived. He required some persuading to leave off his attack and accompany us.”

Yeah. Like either Thor or Steve had any kind of a track record when it comes to dealing with crazy.

Releasing Barnes’ other arm, Steve shifted his grip to try and keep from being choked into unconsciousness. The downside, of course, was that Steve started to turn blue. The upside was that Barnes lost his mobility, allowing Thor to come up behind both men and wrap them in a bear hug. “Keep ahold of his arms, my friend. Loki! Before father sends his guards, if you please, a little assistance calming Son of Barnes.”

Loki rolled his eyes, but for a change, he did not argue with Thor that Odin was not his father.

Reluctantly, Tony stepped aside, but the minute Loki passed by, he fell in behind him. Not that he needed to have worried, what with Steve hanging onto Barnes’ arms, while Thor denied the pair any leverage to struggle with by simply lifting them enough that their feet didn’t touch the glowing crystal of the bridge.

“Whatever you do, don’t hurt him!” Steve gasped, and casting a slightly bulging eye at the green ball of light now streaming from at the tips of Loki’s fingers.

Giving Steve his best ‘*bitch, please*’ face, Loki muttered something too low for Tony to hear. Barnes renewed his efforts to escape as the green mist started curling around his head, but it was only a matter of seconds before his movements started to slow. And only a minute later when he lost the fight to keep his eyes open, slumping in Thor’s grip.

“He seems to have an enhanced metabolism like mine,” Steve fretted as he gathered his friend into his arms bridal style and stood with only a bit of a grunt. “Do you really think that will hold him?”

Laughing, Thor put his arm around Steve’s shoulder and guided him to where the approaching skiff would land. “Steven, Loki here has sleeping spells that can drop an enraged rock.” Tossing a proud look at his younger brother, Thor bragged, “In fact, once when we were younger, he even managed to slyly cast one on the All Father when he was making Mother frantic over his determination to get out of bed when injured.”

“Really?” was Steve’s almost absent reply as his brows furrowed and his expression cycled from puzzled, to suspicious, to thoughtful as he studied the younger god.

“So if you can do that? Why didn’t you just put us all to sleep in the forest in Germany? Or drop the Hulk before he could grab you?”

“Indeed,” Loki drawled. Drawing himself up like an offended cat, he flicked a glance at Thor and his suddenly slumped shoulders. “Why didn’t I make any use of my considerable magic, other than a few paltry illusions during the invasion? Anyone who knows what I am capable of might have wondered that... If they had chosen to think a moment, rather than trying to solve all their problems with a chunk of metal on the end of a stick.”

“Well, yeah, that’s why I’m asking. Clint seemed to have full access to his tal--”

“Come, by the time we get to the manor, Eir should be there to examine your friend. It is just vaguely possible that there might be a medical reason your best friend has refused to have anything to do with you over the last several years.”

“Loki!”

“Thor!”

Ignoring the sniping brothers, and hiding a yawn, Tony just waved Steve towards the now landed skiff, not really able to believe that they woke him up for this.

“I really would like to get him checked over by a doctor,” Steve said hesitantly, as he sat on the seat running along the far side of the flying boat, Barnes lolling against his shoulder, “but I don’t want anyone to be in danger when he wakes up.”

“My dear Captain, not to worry,” Loki assured him while climbing into the skiff, followed by his guards. “We have a very secure prison cell in the third basement that Tony uses for me when we argue.”

“What?!” Steve and Thor exclaimed almost in unison. Thunder rumbled ominously, and Tony felt a sharp pain settle in, right behind his left eye. Just once would it be too much for Loki to let something go? Honestly? Was that too much to ask for?

Heimdall grimaced as a small lightning bolt raced across the sky.

“Tony? You have a prison cell in your house?” Steve couldn’t have sounded any more disapproving if he had been told that Tony had taken up puppy dissection as a hobby.

“Oh for the love of Pete! Loki, for the last time, it is not a prison cell! It is our get-along room.”

“Indeed? Most Midgardians have a get along shirt, not an impenetrable inescapable room in their sub-basement.”

“True. But those who do have one, don’t have one nearly as nice as ours.” Tony leered wagging his brows. Tony’s voice and body language were so suggestive that Rogers, starting to turn pink, pulled Barnes protectively closer to him. A moment later, realizing what he was doing, Rogers glanced down at the slumbering man in his arms, blushing even brighter.

“Tony...”

“Thor? Look, don’t even go there with me,” Tony retorted, irritation lacing the edge of his words as he shoved the big blond towards the skiff. “With the exception of that one time your father tried to decree that Mister Wizard here, was going to have to hold classes in how to rebuild a Space-spanning-rainbow-bridge for all those wand-waving yutzes he can’t stand, Loki has never been in there by himself.”

“Oh.” Thor mumbled, looking somewhat mollified.

And just so he would not be the only one suffering, Tony decided to toss in a bit of explanation that he knew would pay Loki back for being such a prick.

“Yeah. *Oh*. Do you recall how livid Lo was when the All Dad dropped that little bomb on him? Or all the screaming they were doing before I ended up dragging Snookums out of the palace before he said something that would get him tossed in a real prison cell? And besides, it wasn’t like I tossed him in there alone; Vanargand was there to comfort him.”

“Vanargand?”

Loki flinched as a delighted grin blossomed on the blond bearded face.

“Loki, you still have your stuffed toy wolf? I haven’t seen him since--”

“Yes,” Loki interrupted snappishly, shooting daggers at Tony, before malevolently glittering green eyes glared at Thor, totally at odds with the blush rising from his jawline, tinting his cheeks a delicate rose color. “Yes, I still have Vanargand. Not that it is any of your business, *Thoor*,” he said, childishly slurring his brother’s name.

“Still, Tony. A prison cell?” Steve said frowning.

“*Look*, for the *last* time it is not a prison cell, it’s a get-along room with an unalterable timer for two very powerful, stubborn people. Our shrinks recommended it. When we can’t come to an agreement on something, and one of us is just flat tired of arguing about it, we’re supposed to drag one another down there. Where we usually pout and ignore each other for a while, him reading, me working on my tablet, and then eventually we get bored and watch a movie or something while we try to come to a compromise. Trust me Steve, very few prison cells have a big screen TV, kitchenette, couch and an Xbox for crying out loud.”

“Still...”

“Loki!” Thor’s thunder rumbled only marginally louder than the soon-to-be-wet, and cursing Heimdall. Who, to listen to him, was apparently up to here, and completely tired of dealing with Loki and Thor’s sibling drama. Particularly when said drama was accompanied by one of Thor’s storms. Shooting his brother a look of abject betrayal, Thor practically stuck out his lower lip in a pout worthy of a five year old before exclaiming, “You have an Xbox setup here on Asgard, and you didn’t tell me? You know how fond I am of Auto’s of Grand Theft!”

“*Thank you*, Stark.” Black holes had nothing on Loki’s lack of inflection.

“No problem, pumpkin,” Tony retorted gleefully, completely relishing the dark scowl on his god’s face, and knowing he had totally paid back his bitchy spouse for trying to get Tony in trouble by mentioning their *get-along room*. And, not incidentally, looking forward to Thor trying to bond with his brother while playing his favorite video game, a game he knew Loki loathed. But the real kicker? The fact that Tony seldom won a prank war with his Trickster god? That... that was only making his victory all the sweeter. Because, come on, exposing the continued existence of Vanargand and the location of the only Xbox in Asgard to Thor? It just didn’t get any better than that.

Still.... Since absence was the better part of valor, Tony waved a hasty good bye to Heimdall, mumbled something about making sure everything was ready when they got there, and took off for the manor before Loki could decide on the most painful way to retaliate.

It was no surprise that Eir was snippy about doing a consult, and not because she minded helping. Rather because Tony had butted heads with her many times over the years about Loki's medical care. The good news was that while there were signs of past brain damage... it was exactly that. Past damage.

The bad news, of course, was that the reason Steve's buddy had been avoiding him and taking out his pain on hidden Hydra cells all these years, was because he wasn't really brain damaged. He just didn't feel worthy to be around his one-time friend Captain America, what with all the horrible stuff he had done over the years.

Several days later, the best news was... that it didn't matter anymore.

Since even Steve wasn't sure how it had happened, Tony decided to go to the source. Of course, he made sure to work his beloved Trickster into a complacent, sexed out, puddle of warm goo before he started asking questions.

"So." Sweeping strong fingers down his god's long back, Tony murmured into Loki's ear, "How *did* you get Barnes to go along with your plan."

Shifting, Loki unburied his face, turning one sleepy eye towards Tony, and regarded him for a long moment before saying, "*Are we really going to discuss that now?*"

Not that Tony didn't sympathize with him, since what his own body wanted to do was stretch a bit and then be spooned until morning. Where, if he was lucky, there might be a repeat of the last hour. Still, indulging himself got no answers, so he just nodded and hummed in an interrogative manner.

"Fine." Loki huffed. "I merely pointed out that Captain Rogers was not only a Super Solider, but he was also, when it came to Sergeant Barnes, super stubborn, and frankly, more than super stupid. And that people were using that stupid stubbornness to set up traps for him." Rolling over on his back, he waited until Tony settled himself against his chest before continuing. "Traps that Captain Rogers was now desperate enough to face alone. While I would hate to use his guilty conscience against him," Loki continued running idle fingers through Tony's hair, "it seemed expedient. Particularly when I pointed out how many deals the Captain had made over the years with people of extremely dubious mortality while trying to find him."

Sitting up, Tony caught Loki's eye and said skeptically, "Really? You got him to agree by telling him Phil and Agent Romanoff were dodgy?"

Eyebrows pinched together, Loki slipped an arm under his head, unconsciously shifting into one of his long, lean, artistic poses that Tony just loved.

"Tony, convincing people to do something they'd rather not is what I do. It didn't take many examples of Shield's, and now Sword's more dubious acts, and their past associations with this Hydra, which Sargent Barnes is aware of, to illustrate the caliber of people that your Captain America was indebted to for his leads and information. Additionally, I may have shared a few tales of our various supposedly unforgivable past deeds."

Okay. So, that was a surprise, what with Loki normally not discussing his past deeds unless his shrink was insisting. Scooching over a bit closer, Tony stroked light fingers down the outside of Loki's smooth thigh. "That was awfully nice of you, Bambi. I didn't know you liked Steve that much."

"Don't be ridiculous, Stark; I don't care a rush for the man. However, as anyone can see, he is

barely aging. This means he is going to be around for a much longer time than your average Midgardian.” Moving closer, Loki curled towards Tony, who shifted his stroking finger tips to outline the hollow of his Trickster’s hip. “He could have spent the next several years looking for his friend. Yes?”

“True,” Tony nodded; knowing that Steve was stubborn enough that only death would stop him once he had decided to do something.

“Who knows what kind of injuries you might have received going to his aid,” Loki said, sighing, his brows lowering in a heavy frown, almost involuntarily scanning Tony as if imagining possible ways he might have been injured in some future fight protecting Steve. “Safer for all if he and his friend reconcile sooner, rather than later. This is why I convinced Sargent Barnes, once his healing was complete, to accept our hospitality in New York, and at least, consult with Doctors Schafer and Rozmon.”

Tony lifted one brow. “And you think that they’ll accept him as a patient? Just like that?”

Loki’s voice, which had been growing ever less languid, finally took on the ‘Harken to the Prince’ tones that never failed to send a shiver down Tony’s spine. “Please. They are for all intents and purposes employees of Stark International these days. Besides our therapy, the only other task they have is vetting the pro-tolerance and self-determination movies and books we make available on the Mischief Net and your coffee houses. They *will* see who we tell them to see.”

Now that, Tony could not argue with, seeing as the pair were now retired from private practice, on retainer, and worked solely out of an office suite on Stark Tower’s twelfth floor. Mostly consulting on Loki’s Progress Asgard Project, in between their visits to them. Still, sometimes Lo was a bit high handed in his dealings with the good doctors. Possibly because he was pissed at them for some of the stuff they said to him during their therapy? Or worse, made him say himself?

Tony bit his lower lip trying to keep his grin from becoming visible. Or, more likely it was because his hot babe of a partner sometimes just fell back into the royal asshole, mini-Odin role he’d trained for his whole life. Not that Tony would ever bring *that* up.

“And who better than them in dealing with issues related to supernatural mental coercion, extended life span issues, and remorse?”

Which Tony had to agree with. Hell. He would bet that Clint would have been ten times less a prick if he had seen the duo rather than the Shield shrinks who worried more about him being compromised, and not really giving a fuck if he was eaten up with guilt over the stuff he’d done while being one of the Mad Titan’s flying monkeys.

“Besides, I daresay once the good Captain and his friend get settled back in, he will need something else to turn his attention to. He is a hero; he feels passionately about issues; and while I can’t see him as a politician--”

Tony snorted at that visual. “Hell no. Steve is way too plain spoken. The anti-vaxers are still pissed at him.”

“Indeed. But as an advocate? Perhaps for the Brooklyn he loves so much? Or underprivileged children? Or stricken warriors?” Capturing Tony’s hand, Loki tugged him down, green eyes fastened on his as they lay facing each other. “No matter what Captain Rogers does, as one of Midgard’s heroes, he will still have influence. It will not hurt for Asgard and Thor to have assisted him, nor will it hurt the House of Stark to have Captain America in debt to them.”

Still gazing at Loki, Tony didn't say anything, nor did he let his expression change. But deep inside his chest he could feel something crack. It wasn't that Loki couldn't be kind; because he really quite often was. It was more that Loki refused to *be seen* as being compassionate, without a plainly visible advantage to show the public at large. Granted, Lo was great at twisting reasoning into a pretzel to find such an advantage, Trickster god and all that. But Tony wondered sadly if he was ever going to see the day when his Bambi felt secure enough to let people know that the advantages he sought were often just protective camouflage.

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement. If you'd like to leave something, but struggle with what to say, see the endnotes in chapter 18. :D

****** Trigger Warnings **** Canon Typical Violence.**

Chapter 22 - Loki was in a state

Chapter Summary

Everybody Dance Now! And hide. And have meltdowns. Tony, Loki, Steve and Bucky in this section.

Chapter Notes

WinterFrost(ish?) Beta Search ... I am hoping to do a caprb bang with Loki and Bucky, I expect it to be between 5-10k (I hope), and not at all explicit (more character driven) if this is your cup of tea, and you would like to beta, please drop me a comment or hit me up on tumblr and I will send you my email and we can talk about it. Generally, I am looking for assistance with grammar, and flow, which I suck at. With perhaps some thoughts or ideas on where the story line is headed.

This chapter is so choppy, I swear it looks like I used a ginsu knife on it. My bad. However, in my defence, despite losing all momentum, this story was pushed towards completion. Even if it took twice as long as the two much larger arcs that came before it. Let no fic of mine be an incomplete WIP... and other words to that effect.

Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes, which I sadly make a lot of, are mine.

See Trigger Warnings in End Notes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 22 - Loki was in a state

Once Barnes' treatment was well underway and he was declared stable enough for polite company, the cyborg was no longer under constant surveillance by Eir and her minions. In fact, Mister Roboto was now encouraged to partake in an active schedule that included lots of personal interactions, so as to pinpoint areas where more delicate repairs were needed. Ostensibly in support of this program, Loki pressed Thor to introduce Barnes and, more importantly, Spangles to the wonders of Asgard. It was presented as a gesture of good will on Loki's part, but Tony was pretty sure it was more to reduce the time that the overly effusive Steve had to spend dragging Barnes around the BiFrost site, trying to find a way for them to thank Loki for all his help.

Of course, various activities went over better than others. The general, run-of-the-mill, Hooray-it-is-Tuesday feasts were okay. Appetite-wise Spangles could hold his own with everyone but Asgard's own Pillsbury Dough Boy. As for his boy Barnes, well, the guy could use the calories.

And frankly, it was pretty funny watching Grampa America being nudged awake during a Skaldic feast by a formerly brainwashed assassin who wielded a vicious elbow. But, hey, it wasn't like Rogers was the only one nodding off.

Not surprisingly, given the battle dance training they received from childhood, Asgardians liked to dance. And it was here that the boys from Brooklyn experienced their first little social hiccup. Lots of Space Viking feasts were dedicated towards dancing. Tony thought maybe they did that just to keep the drinking from getting too out of hand. At any rate, on alternate festivals with a diacritical mark, prancing was the order of the day. Or evening. Various sorts of dancing anyhow. The whole doing your own thing was very popular, and reminded Tony of his younger years when he'd been all about finding new steps to work into his house dance repertoire. Additionally, they had group dances, Viking line dancing, female only dances, male only dances, and pretty much every combination you could think of. Tony hadn't been aware that there were quite so many ways to dance.

And, there was no such thing as standing on the sidelines. If your group was up, you danced. At least until later in the evening and it was okay to get drunk. Unfortunately for Tony, unlike the female only dancing, which was pretty much about grace and elegance, or creating complicated patterns, Ass-guardian males dances were pretty much sparring practice. Except in place of swords or spears, they often used double staves or staffs, at least when they weren't chest bashing each other like bulls during mating season.

Suffice to say none of the male dances worked for Tony. Stick work of any kind took many more years of practice than he was willing to devote to them. At least, if you wanted to do it without getting yourself killed. And quite frankly he didn't have the height, weight, or desire to go in for the chest thumping, slam dance styles.

Which is how it came about that Tony had introduced Loki, and Asgard, to a form of stylized dance he was comfortable with. Tony was fast on his feet, and precision was something he could do. And just maybe when the original Jarvis had to accompany Howard, and Tony was left in the care of Fiona, the upstairs maid... Well, he might have been taught a little bit of Celtic dance. Or a lot. He was bored, and frankly if she kept him dancing, he was either right under her eye, or too tired to get into trouble the minute her back was turned. Fi was sneaky that way.

Needless to say, his God picked it up in a heartbeat, leaving Tony to practice like crazy upping his game just so he could stay top dog with his own dance. At least until Capsicle and company joined in.

Who knew their favorite super soldier used be dragged to dance class every Saturday evening down in their church basement. With Steve joining in when his asthma allowed, or watching from a warm spot by the boiler when he couldn't. From what Tony gathered, his mom's lessons were the only dance instruction Steve had really ever had, barring a quick, but seldom used, jitterbug lesson he later got from Barnes.

The problem was, the more bull-like Ás, having seen what happen to Hafji and his cousin Laut, might not get too vocal when, short, Midgardian Tony, and the obviously elf built Loki, both of whom had a long list of titles, did their turn dancing something that was not at all real man's dance. But, they had no compunction about loudly wondering what obvious flaw, non-noble Rogerson possessed that he should also be 'sissy' dancing. Sissy, being a much politer than the words actually used.

Tony and Loki were standing on the side lines, having been driven off the floor by Steve's speed and proficiency, when Barnes reached his limit.

Making fun of Steve, even if he was no longer a scrappy, scrawny kid, was apparently a James Buchanan Barnes no go. Although he had previously used his convalescence state to avoid the dance floor, Barnes slipped away from the healer he'd been talking to, and started dancing until he

was right in front of one of the more vocal smart mouths ragging on Steve. Murder glare at full force, Barnes performed a series of complicated steps, despite the fact that that he was wearing heavy steel toed boots, which no doubt had spring loaded shivs built into them somewhere.

Barnes' Celtic-ish dance style wasn't nearly as polished as Steve's, but his assassin skills were more than good enough to flick out a lightning fast double kick to vocal jerk's jaw, knocking him flat out on his ass.

Regardless of the fact that during the men's dances, accidents did sometimes involve the crowd... It might have gone pear-shaped after that if it hadn't been for the fact that Loki and Steve hurriedly quick stepped over to dance alongside Barnes. Barnes' murderous stare, coupled with Loki's fuck-with-me-at-your-peril glare, and Steve's Captain-America-is-very-disappointed-with-you frown caused the guy's friend to hesitate. At least long enough for Tony to arrive, since certain adjustments delayed him for a moment.... Still, Tony was there in time for the heckler to recover enough to roar up from the floor towards Barnes, at which point in time Tony, with absolutely no compunction what-so-ever, swung his hand from his behind his back, and shot the guy with an Asgard grade repulsor.

Yeah, it was an Indiana Jones/Han Solo dick move, but to hell with that, Tony never claimed that he wasn't the kind of person to shoot first. And besides, the All Father had made it very clear to Tony that he didn't want Loki in anymore feast hall brawls. So anyone who had a complaint could take it up with the Gallows God himself.

No one did.

OoooO

Despite the numerous feasts, Thor did manage to drag his guests to several other tourist spots. Picturesque lakes, taverns, festival markets, taverns, sporting events, taverns, notable public memorials, taverns, and finally a tour of Asgard's weapon vault. Tony dodged joining them for most of the tours, but Loki insisted that he join them for the weapon's vault outing.

Which Tony had to admit was enlightening. Thor, who wasn't as clueless as he liked to pretend, gave a bombastic account of the grand battles that Asgard had fought to win the items proudly displayed... While threading a warning through his stories, which may or may not have been for Tony's benefit... That warning being that bad things happened to those who refused to voluntarily give up any powerful artifact that Odin coveted. Of course, old one eye would generally dress up his theft as a perceived threat to Asgard that had to be neutralized. But from reading between the lines of Thor stories, the artifact in question was often simply something Odin coveted.

Odin's rapacity was something Tony definitely kept in mind, what with his arc reactor playing such an important part in the crystal re-growth of the BiFrost.

Despite the upholding of proprietary rights in the Nine Realms being so old a custom that it wasn't even written into law, Loki worried. And honestly, anything that worried his trickster was something you definitely had to keep an eye on. So, yeah. Historically the dwarfs, elves, Vanir, and even the Jotuns, were allowed to keep certain processes proprietary. But none of those were involved in the BiFrost's rebuilding. Nope. The only proprietary non-Asgardian tech being used was from Midgard, which did not have a history of historically protected monopolies within the Nine Realms.

Loki worried, Thor warned, Tony sometimes got migraines thinking about it.

OoooO

Of course Loki was worried about a lot these days. The BiFrost work site was particularly difficult, and there had been, well, let's just call them incidents. The mages Odin had assembled to try and ferret out how Loki had succeeded where they had failed, were no happier to be there than Loki was to have them. And now, if it wasn't Odin haranguing him, it was Thor hovering protectively and getting in Loki's way every time he turned around. Not that Loki could say anything, because... Well, Odin. And while Lo might want to unload on Thor, the Thunderer's presence, or in his or Tony's absence, that of a fiercely scowling Barnes is what kept said disgruntled mages at a distance. Thor and Tony couldn't be there all the time, but apparently, word had got around that Barnes was a berserker's berserker.

Additional guarding to protect Loki from low-level hacks he could have previously vanquished with a wave of his hand, was definitely not sitting well with Tony's prince. Since Thor was, in Loki's opinion, as magically trained as a sack of onions. And as such it was Thor's, Tony's, and, until they returned to earth, the Brooklyn Boy's 'mere' presence, and the glowering promise of mass retribution if 'anything' happened to Loki that was providing the actual protection. And, no. That definitely did not sit well with Tony's gorgeous brat.

But honestly? While Tony could sympathize with Loki about this even being necessary, he was frankly overjoyed. They'd heard whispers, via Loki's excellent spy net, that some of the mages suspected that an enraged Thor might decide that any misstep on their part would result in the lot of them ending up as Mage-Extra-Crispy piled high on a vibranium platter. And that, had a few of the more thoughtful spell casters now riding point protection, making sure none of their brethren did anything to anger their future king. This, while comforting to Tony, was yet another source of irritation for his already terminally cranky god.

OoooO

"Stark!"

Dropping the assemblage he'd been working on, Tony nipped over towards the lab's emergency exit as the echoes of his name still rang ominously throughout the basement. "I wasn't here Jarvis. And you don't expect me home for a few hours."

"Very good sir. And if Prince Loki asks for you whereabouts what should I tell him?"

Tony paused, thinking furiously, "Accountant. I've gone to see our accountant."

"For the fourth time this week, Sir?"

Okay, so maybe it wasn't the most believable destination Tony could think of, but it was one of the few that Loki wouldn't follow up on. What with their chief account having offices tucked into a small corner of the palace's hall of business.

"STARK!"

"Yes!" Tony practically yelped as he slid through the heavy metal door, closing and locking it behind him. It wasn't, Tony told himself as the bolts shot deep into the thick stone framing the door, that he was afraid of his little Viking gumdrop. However, the last several days had been a diva-craving-cocaine-ish nightmare, and nothing Tony could say or do would make his god happy. Yes, it was admirable that Loki was not taking out his stress and bad temper on his construction

crews, his brother, the assembled mages, or their domestic staff. And yes, on some level, Tony was thrilled that Loki trusted him enough not to worry about that with him... But honestly? The guy could be a Grade-A, Alpha Bitch and there was just no pleasing him when he first got home from the BiFrost's work site.

If the new lab protocols Tony had put in place to block Janis held, Loki would be crankily unaware that Tony had fled the house the instant he started yelling. Then, after an hour or so to unwind, a glass or five of wine, hopefully a short, pre-dinner nap and Loki would be in a much better mood when Tony swanned in bearing... Baked goods? Yes. Tonight he would go with pastry. Specifically those buttery, flaky, little wild cherry tart things that Lo was so fond of. And maybe, just to be sure, a couple of Vanaheim bath bombs held in reserve in case the tarts didn't work. Tesla knew they were going through bath bombs like popcorn these days.

A quick trip to a nearby market, and a less quick stop at their own StarkRoast Coffee, where Tony would while away an hour reading over various SI proposals awaiting his approval should do the trick. Or rather, it usually did. Generally, Tony could sneak back into the house, press a light kiss on the brow of his somewhat de-stressed hot god, and suggest they go have dinner. But today was not apparently a normal day. When Tony got home, Loki was still pacing like an angry panther.

Setting coffee, StarkPad and appeasement offerings down on a small side table Tony opened his arms wide offering comfort, and gave Loki his cheeriest, cheekiest smile.

"Hello Sweetums. Let me guess. Bad day at the BiFrost?"

Loki reared back, as if he hadn't heard this or a similar greeting a dozen times in the last month.

Stalking up over to him, face almost white with rage, Loki kept his eyes locked on Tony's as his hand shot out, clearing the side table with a single sweep of his arm. Coffee, electronics, pastries and bath bombs hit so hard the later flew out of their packages, making an absolute mess all over the cream colored rug that defined the seating group. Not to mention the backs of two of the chairs.

Okay....

Loki, whose body had followed through with his swing, whirled back towards him, and for one second Tony thought the god might actually turn on him. And from the looks of it, Loki thought so also. Almost too fast to follow, appalled, stricken, lost and despairing expressions flickered across a face that almost never showed what it didn't want you to see.

OoooO

While Tony didn't remember when they had made it into the bedroom, the lack of golden light leaking around the edges of the long drapes indicated that it was now full on night. And that was as good as he was going to get without asking Jarvis, since he was currently trapped by Loki doing an excellent imitation of an octopus.

A soft, curvy, and long limbed, but still, octopus-like god. Warm breaths puffed against his shoulder from where she was tucked up under his chin, and a few scented curls tickled Tony's cheek and jaw. That Lo hadn't changed back to her base male state before falling asleep, spoke volumes as to her still feeling the need to be comforted and cosseted. And from the way the evening had went, Tony was certain this had been a desire long denied by his god.

Equally desired apparently, was her need to have someone else take control, something Loki was

only comfortable with in female guise. Tony blamed Asgard's fucked up gender roles that Loki felt it necessary to change into his female form. Male Loki, no matter how badly he needed release, was apparently not able to go from angry sex to a sobbing mess that took several warm wash cloths and a good two hours of petting to recover from.

And, no. Tony wasn't going to challenge Loki to 'man up', in more ways than one. Or demand that Lo discuss this immediately with his shrink. Rather, Tony was going to let it go and pray that it had been cathartic enough to assuage whatever second hand, unremembered but still present guilt that Loki had bubbling up through the stress that was Asgard and the Bifrost Reconstruction.

Tony and Loki didn't have a sappy relationship. Oh granted they occasionally had their tender moments, because come-on, who didn't. But that is pretty much all they were, moments. And they were both well aware that it was only going to be a moment, and then one or the other of them was going to turn right back into a sarcastic, entitled asshole. This was okay too, since they had both fallen in love with said snarky jerk.

But Tony would be lying if he didn't admit he enjoyed this side of Loki. Not the racking sobs until her nose ran part obviously. That part was a worry for another day. However, the part that let Loki cling to Tony as he petted her, murmuring soothing assurances, and declarations of unwavering affection...For more than sixty seconds. Yeah. As crappy as the crying jag had been, Loki accepting softer affection was something Tony thought he could be forgiven for enjoying. And wishing like hell, it happened more often. Except, maybe, without all the angst, and tears. And also wishing that maybe that someday Loki could realize that Tony didn't have a problem cuddling, petting and openly adoring Loki in whatever guise he inhabited.

Loki sighed, muttering something unintelligible into his shoulder. Tony paused, listening intently, but then continued stroking his fingers through the long fall of curls spread across her back.

And, yeah. Tony definitely saw several, painful conversations trying to get Loki to understand that atonement was not a prerequisite for being comforted when you needed it. Yielding, soft, begging to be cherished, and wanting to be forgiven? If only by Tony, and only for the relatively trivial issue of being a stone-cold diva for the last two weeks? Wrong on so many levels.

But baby steps, Tony comforted himself as he drifted off. Baby Steps.

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement. If you'd like to leave something, but struggle with what to say, see the endnotes in chapter 18. :D

****** Trigger Warnings **** A small amount of Canon Typical Violence, and a stress related melt down.**

Chapter 23 - Get Out Of Jail Free

Chapter Summary

Everyone has a price, some just are harder to accept than others.

Chapter Notes

WinterFrost(ish?) Beta Search ... I am hoping to do a caprb bang with Loki and Bucky, I expect it to be between 5-10k (I hope), character driven, smut light at the very most. if this is your cup of tea, and you would like to beta, please drop me a comment or hit me up on tumblr and I will send you my email and we can talk about it. Generally, I am looking for assistance with grammar, and flow, which I suck at. With perhaps some thoughts or ideas on where the story line is headed. (I will say, Tony keeps trying to stick his suave self into the darn thing as more than just a side character. He is so bossy.)

The Queens Grace Continuum is all done now except the epilogue. I do hope you guys have enjoyed it.

Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes, which I sadly make a lot of, are mine.

SERIOUSLY! - See Trigger Warnings in End Notes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 23 - Get Out Of Jail Free

It had been well over two hours since Karl Jarvis had delivered Prince Consort Stark's orders to the night duty guard. It been almost an hour since the screaming had finally stopped. The soft click of the privacy lock alerted Nerthus that someone was leaving the family's private quarters. Finger to his lips Prinsgemalen Stark slipped out the door, closing it gingerly behind him, and then silently ghosting down the wide stairs, motioning urgently for Nerthus to open the main door.

Quietly!

Casting one last glanced up the stairs, Lord Stark eased out the door, closing it gingerly behind him. The moment the wide door was closed to his satisfaction, he sprinted towards the skiff that Kvasir had waiting for him. Much in the manner like one being chased by a Balrog, which coincidently is what the screeches penetrating all the way to the servant's area in the lower level had sounded like.

Lord Stark moved so fast crossing the court yard to the transport, that Nerthus wondered if a Balrog *was* in close pursuit. But only momentarily, as the need to catch up to, and scramble aboard the skiff, now demanded his full attention. He barely made it aboard before the skiff headed towards the main gates.

At speed.

OoooO

Despite the fact that he was not aging, Tony was getting far too old for this shit.

“Faster,” Tony demanded. Also despite the fact that Tony was trying not to make the servants and attendants regard Jarvis as too much of a big brother, or rather too much like Heimdall’s little brother, tonight was not the night to downplay Jarvis’s involvement.

“Okay. So. Jarvis tells me that instead of sending a message to the palace, Aldfrig instead escorted Marji there personally. Anyone want to clue me in on why?”

“My lord, the Queen was most likely asleep already. And getting a message to her without alerting or alarming palace staff would be almost impossible. However, from her years of taking care of the princes, Karl Marji is well known to the Queen’s attendants. No doubt she thought it would be easier to go in person. Since Commander Aldfrig is well known to the guard captain, who was appointed long after Karl Marji had retired from the city; he decided to escort her to make sure she had no problems gaining entrance that restricted area of the palace.”

And what the hell. It apparently worked.

Frigga and Thor were both in Tony’s palace apartment when he fired through the door like he was being chased by rabid tax auditors.

“Anthony, what is wrong with Loki?” Frigga demanded, “Marji said he was very upset. Did you have a fight?” Her normally warm blue eyes grew glacial, “Did you somehow hurt him?”

Thor stopped his pacing, turned a hard look towards Tony, and except for the spasmodic clenching of his right hand, went completely still.

“What! No!” He yelped. Completely involuntarily of course, but totally understandable with the amount of pure, unadulterated Space Viking animosity currently being directed his way.

“Well. Maybe?” He hastened to add as Thor reached for his hammer. “But not really! He’s just really upset.”

“Oh?”

“Well, hysterical might be more accurate. But seeing as how he is a she right now, you didn’t hear the word hysterical from me. Okay?”

“Anthony Stark, what is going on with my son.”

“Daughter.”

Frigga waved a hand dismissively. “Yes, yes. Occasionally.”

“Yeah. About that. It is just possible; it could be permanent for the next year.”

In the time it took Thor to furrow his brows in confusion, Frigga’s countenance brightened until the joy shining out of her eyes was enough to blind a someone. I.e., Tony.

“Oh. How marvelous.”

“Yeah? Maybe, maybe not.”

“This does not please you?” She asked, her voice instantly turning deadly cold.

By now, Thor was pretty much up to speed, but he had only just opened his mouth, for what was no doubt a round of *hail and hearty* congratulations when Frigga’s frigid tones caused him to snap it shut again.

“Maybe?”

“*Maybe?*”

Tony was well aware that Queens did not become shrill and strident. But whatever octave they substituted for it, Frigga hit it note perfect. Or at least she did until her voice dropped down into a feral snarl, “And *this* does not please you, Anthony, son of Stark?”

Related by blood or not, it was plain where Loki had picked up his passive aggressiveness prissyness.

“Well yeah. It pretty much does, but we have a problem here. A formerly six-foot-two problem, that was adamant that he wasn’t going to play the, ‘have-a-baby-get-out-of-jail-free’ card.”

“Oh.” The blue wisps of Seiðr that had gathered around Frigga’s slender finger tips disappeared, with an almost audible pop.

After waiting a moment longer to see if Frigga had anything else to say, Thor asked, “But Tony, how did this happen?”

Amazed that his eyes were not currently rolling right out of his head, Tony scoffed. “Seriously Point Break? You’re going to ask me where babies come from? Accidents happen, you know. People get a little carried away, stuff isn’t perhaps handled as gently as it should be, and boom! Little Lokii get conceived.”

And while contraception was a perfectly natural function, and Tony was by no means shy about his sexual activities, he had never really discussed either of topics in front of somebody’s mother before. And he really didn’t want to discuss the specific activity that had possibly contributed to the ‘accident’.

“Look, do we really need to go into the mechanics of this with your mother standing here?” Because honestly, Tony really, really, didn’t want to have that discussion with anyone, let alone Frigga. “Besides, if we are doing a Question-and-Answer thing, I want to know how likely it is that he— She, could accurately know that a bun had been popped in the oven within ten minutes of it occurring? Don’t those things take time to rise, or something?”

Frigga blinked. “Anthony, I am well aware of the many ways that children are conceived. Although I will admit that Loki’s shape shifting, mixed heritage, and... your Midgardian cultural practices, do add to the possible variables. However, as for knowing? Yes. A skilled seiðr user would know almost immediately.” The expressions flickering across her face reflecting that she was torn between excitement about his news, worry about Loki’s reaction, and amusement at Anthony’s discomfiture. Concern for her youngest won out.

“How upset is Loki?”

Scrubbing his hands across the face, Tony huffed loudly, feeling heat from the blush that had risen up to his cheeks, as he reluctantly made eye contact with his mother-in-law. While Tony would have said previously it was impossible to embarrass him about sex, he really didn’t need the added distraction. Ignoring that, which he had every intention of doing, this was still going to be a

difficult conversation to have with Loki's mother. Not to mention his hammer wielding brother.

"If he was as vexed as you and Marji claim, I am afraid my brother will be wroth with you for many weeks," Thor slyly commiserated, having himself dealt many times with a disgruntled Loki, but still somewhat amused by Tony's predicament.

Tony rolled his eyes. "You know what, buddy? That is the least of my worries right now. And, just so we are all on the same page, remember, remember I did say I knocked up your sister, not your brother."

Thor let out a gusty breath, relaxing fractionally. "Thank the Norns."

And Tony did understand that one. There would have been no living with an unnaturally pregnant, in Asgard's eyes, male Loki, or worse, a blue Jotun Loki. But there was a slight chance that Loki's internalized Asgardian notion that females are allowed the indulgence of softer emotions and pregnancies, might transfer to this current situation. And be marginally more acceptable to Loki, and Asgard. Periodic temper tantrums notwithstanding.

The whole female thing, of course coupled with the odd dichotomy of acceptance that most of Asgardians had regarding what shape shifters can and can't do while in a *delicate condition*, i.e., not being able to shift. Which was, A. how Loki claimed to be aware of the pregnancy. And B, was the source of such an epic temper tantrum that Tony was surprised that Frigga hadn't heard every word she'd screamed as far away as the palace.

While Frigga appeared to be considering all the angles of this news, Thor, once his main concern, that being Loki was female while pregnant, had been addressed—was never one to borrow trouble by over thinking a topic.

"But this is excellent news, Tony," he chortled, striding over and clapping a hard hand on Tony's shoulder. Ignoring the perplexed '*are you fucking kidding me*' look Tony was throwing him, Thor gave him a friendly little shake and said, "And I am sure Loki's upset is merely from his dislike of having someone else change his plans. Once he, or rather she, becomes accustomed to the news, all will be well."

Frigga didn't face palm, most likely because that just wasn't done if you were royalty. But Tony was pretty sure from the pained expression that flitted across her face, she wanted to.

While he didn't want to, Tony was also pretty sure this was the best opening he was going to get to bring up the issue. He allowed himself a small internal sigh, and then waded right into the impending shit-storm.

"Yeah, well. The problem with that is that there is a slight possibility that Loki won't stay pregnant." Tony said, making air quotes around the word 'stay.'

For a few moments they both just stared at Tony. Then Thor frowned, "Surely you are mistaken. Such things do not occur in Asgard." Which was pretty much true, Tony knew, no doubt caused by their low birth rate.

However.

Frigga might be a queen, Thor a prince, and both of them gods. But the implacable expression on Tony's face was more than an indication that he was not the one who was mistaken about what Loki might or might not do. Asgardian norms notwithstanding.

"Look. Loki decided a long time ago, he wasn't going to get his sentence reduced by 'breeding' his

way out of it. Odin knows this. I told him myself.”

Frigga’s eyes narrowed in a way that told both Tony, and Thor that while Odin may have been told, she had never been informed. Not that Tony gave a single fuck how much trouble he’d just dropped the old bastard in.

“Is it possible Loki will change his mind. Yeah. Sure. It could happen. It might even be probable, which is no doubt what caused him to lose her ever loving mind. And have a screaming fit they may have heard on Midgard.

“But do I want to take that chance? No. No, I do not. Therefore we are going to come up with some way to solve this problem, and get Odin on board. **And**, we are going to do it right damn **now**.”

“Even if Loki steeled himself to commit such an act, it would not be possible on Asgard, particularly not if Father was on alert for such an attempt,” Thor mused, more to himself than to Tony.

“Really, Thor? How long have you *known* Loki?” Dismissing Thor’s cluelessness, Tony turned to Frigga. “Well?”

OoooO

The major sticking point of course is finishing the damn Bi-Frost. First of course because that was a non-negotiable requirement of Loki’s sentence. Tony knew that was most likely doable before the tadpole made its appearance. Since the stress of the Bi-Frost’s final touches was what was currently freaking Loki out, in the first place... Well, that and the thought of the many no doubt disagreeable or distasteful side jobs that Loki would be assigned once the bridge was complete.

Not something Lo would need to worry about now that she was pregnant... Except for her being adamant about not wanting to use that *baby-gets-you-out-of-jail-free* card.

Which rolled right back to the question: how would Loki even finish the Bi-Frost in the first place? Frigga was of the opinion that using a glamour to keep up a male appearance was out. There were just too many interested mages congregating on the fringes of the work site these days. Although she did think judicious scheduling, coupled with some hidden lift shoes and a cape would work.

The reduced scheduling being to cut down chances of someone finding out, and more importantly to reduce the stress on a gestating diva. Both of which were why Tony already knew he was going to be stepping in as Loki’s project supervisor, since there is no way in hell he was risking the harmonics of an un-tuned Bi-Frost harming his kid. Hell, he could bring in a few of his industrial Arc Reactors and use that as his excuse for him being on site rather than Loki.

The Bi-Frost problem semi-solved, left them with the face saving deed, that could be used to declare Loki’s sentence complete. Thor started to enumerate the various quests of atonement that people had performed in past sagas, none of which were the least bit helpful. Being as they were not suited for someone of Loki’s temperament or her current physical condition.

While Thor and Tony were left brainstorming, Frigga went to break the news to Odin. At volume apparently. The family great room might be quite a ways from the Royal couple’s bedrooms, but sound does travel when marble is the main building material. Especially with Frigga again hitting the high notes.

As it turned out, a sleep rumped Odin didn’t even make an appearance that evening. It could have been that this was one of those, ‘He’s your daughter, you deal with it’ things. But Tony was pretty

much guessing it was more of a ‘*You are not going to screw up again, I’m fixing it*’, coupled with an ‘*and you **will** agree to whatever I come up with, if you know what is good for you*’.

However, as it happily turned out, Loki’s secret forays into trading with Jotunheim was looking like one of their better bets. As Tony had learned during his pauper panic, Asgard had to pay through the nose for certain items, as stockpiles had long ago been depleted within the realms. Recycling, workarounds, and smuggling had not been enough to keep up with demand.

Of course it was a major surprise to his— rather, her mom and brother, that Loki even had access to Jotunheim goods. Even, if it was currently only enough for Tony’s use and experimentation. Particularly since, as far as they knew, Loki hadn’t set foot anywhere but Midgard in the last twenty years. Fortunately, what they didn’t know about Loki’s repulsor-belt fueled jaunts to other realms wouldn’t hurt Tony. Or imperil his emergency coffee runs to Earth.

“But, how, Anthony?”

Tony did his best congressional shrug. “What? You know about Loki’s little ‘information network,’ right? Hell, how many times has Odin bitched about that?” Frigga nodded. There had been several snide comments about the extensive swath of independent informants Loki had, not only in Asgard but also in the other realms. And while Loki’s informants had nothing to do with the deals she’d been working with the increasingly resigned Býleistr, Tony mentioning them wasn’t technically lying.

And then suggesting that they all greet the dawn, and Loki, at Starkhaus, as a means of distracting Frigga before she could question him more closely? Well, that wasn’t lying either. It was misdirection.

Totally different.

OoooO

Stumbling out of bed with a headache not even seiðr could budge, Loki grabbed the unused night clothes that had been tossed aside last night, and then slouched towards the bathroom, noting, as she crossed the bedroom, that despite the early hour, Tony was absent.

No surprise there. Hel, she didn’t even want to be here. What she did want was for this *fucking hair* to quit getting in her *Norns bedamned way*. However, since facing a mirror wasn’t exactly something she was quite ready for, scraping unruly curls in a messy knot on top of her head was the only solution currently available.

Male sized pants haphazardly cuffed, sleep tunic sliding off one shoulder, and then the other, Loki ran a wet wash cloth sloppily across her face. The cost of removing crusty tear residue, being numerous strands of hair sticking to her damp face.

So be it.

One would think that the morning after a major melt down, one could slip through their private sitting room, into their private office, and be afforded at least a few hours to panic in private.

One would be wrong.

OoooO

From the looks of it, the absolute last thing Loki wanted to deal with this morning was a sitting room full of family members. Or *not* family members, as Loki had often told him. Still, it could have been worse. Odin could have been with them.

“Loki,” Frigga cried, opening her arms invitingly as she stood. She faltered only a few steps from the sofa, no doubt warned by Loki's flinch that her offer of comfort would not be well received.

And okay, Tony's inner asshole found this darkly amusing. Sue him.

What he did not find amusing was the murderous glare and hard sneaky pinch he received as he guided Loki towards his favorite seat. And the waiting pot of hot chocolate. “Bambi, I know you aren't in the best mood right now, but please, sit down, have a cup of cocoa, and give us a few minutes, I think we have some ideas that it would be worthwhile for you to consider.”

Consider being the key word in that sentence, since Tony and Frigga, and hell, even Thor, knew better than to present their ideas to Loki as anything more than suggestions. Fortunately, their suggestions would not only get Lo off the hook before the bambino was born, but also start refilling his personal coffers. Tony and Frigga both knew how to sweeten a deal.

Even if Loki sat silent and stone faced through their entire presentation.

“Face it Lo, it's a deal too good to be refused, and there are even financial incentives, I know you have to be loving that.” And of course, the unspoken lure of getting all his magic and strength back, as well as unrestricted movement coupled and free time that Loki could use for his little social engineering project. That being the ability to stick it to Odin years before they thought they could? Loki was more than ready for all that.

And, as sure as he knew his own name, Tony knew Loki's mind was weighing the advantages against the hidden ‘gotchas’. Even the assurance that he, and Frigga had already sifted the entire agreement several times without finding any, wouldn't stop Lo from going nuts trying to find one. Particularly not with Odin already giving the bare bones of the agreement his grudging approval.

“Leave it, Stark,” Loki snapped, irritably waving away Tony's offer of a refill. Two cups of hot chocolate and over a full page of agreed upon embellishments later, Loki's surliness had not abated one bit. Tony cast a speaking look at Frigga, and then glanced over towards the door. She stood immediately.

“Stop that, Thor,” Frigga unjustly admonished. Motioning her mildly confused son to get up, she said, “If you'll excuse us for a moment? I can see that Thor needs to shake off his fidgets. And while he does that, I'll go tell Marji to get a breakfast tray ready for us.” She smiled at both of them, tossing, “We won't be a moment,” over her shoulder as she closed the door behind them.

Tony understood Loki had already been under a lot of stress before last night's bombshell. And being stuck in a shape that was not one she preferred could not have been making her happy. Not to mention that any unplanned pregnancy was like sand in a gear box of your life. And it was more like boulders when Odin was involved. But still.

“You know, you could try to be a little less pissy, babe. In our wildest dreams, this is a better deal than we'd ever figured we could get.”

“I am well aware of that, Stark,” Loki huffed, irritably tucking a stray curl back up into her bun. “But, don't even try to tell me that Odin would have agreed to even a tenth of this without the All Mother pressuring him.”

“Well, no—” Tony agreed, settling at last on the small sofa beside Loki, and wrapping a tentative arm around her back.

“Indeed not. And what makes you think I want to be indebted to the Queen for her assistance in removing the All Father’s leash from around my neck?”

“Look, babe, I know.”

“She *lied* to me!”

Loki’s shout was more primal heartbreak than anger. And honestly, it tore Tony up to hear it.

“Yeah. Yeah, she did. And it hurt you bad, I got that. I honestly do.” Tony resolutely did not drop the arm he had around her down so he could pat the side of her tummy, but he did tighten it just a bit more. “But, we’re in a time crunch here. So, honestly? We really can’t afford to be too picky about our allies at this time.” Loki huffed again, resolutely turning her pinched face away from him, but not pulling away from the comfort he was offering. Which Tony was going to totally take as a win.

“Besides, Odin doesn’t look like he is going anywhere anytime soon, and since you can’t wrap him around your finger the way you do Thor, we’re going to need an ally, someone who is on the inside high enough up that they can’t be messed with. And why do I have to even tell you this, aren’t you the schemer in the family.”

“They have always considered me so,” she muttered bitterly, worrying slightly trembling hands, that being almost a sure sign of trickster distress.

“No, you goof, of our family.” Tony shoulder bumped him. “I mean I am the McGuyver handy man, bank roll, and of course the good looking one.” Loki, turning back towards him, rolled her eyes. “You are supposed to be the smooth talking scheming political bastard.” He leaned in and pressed a kiss on the side of her jaw. “And unbeknownst to all of them, my *not* de-powered mage supreme.”

Loki, took a steadying breath, almost visibly tucking away the Frigga problem and returning to the topic on hand. After a moment, she scoffed, raised a slim hand and pushed his face away. “Yes. Fine. Scheming. I don’t see any difficulty in StarkInterRealm taking the lead in funneling trade from Jotunheim to Asgard.”

“StarkInterRealm?”

“Yes, a closely held company that Stark InterGalactic, and StarkRoast will have minority share in.”

“Well, Janie will be happy about that. Thor? Maybe not so much,” Tony said, not really caring one way or the other how Hammer time would feel about it. From the tiny smile tipping up the corner of Loki’s mouth, making Jane, future Queen of Asgard happy, at the expense of her husband-to-be was more than a happy coincidence. Tony was just about to tease her about it when, the faint traces of black humor disappeared from her face.

“I didn’t want this to happen this way, Tony. To be honest, I’m not sure I even wanted this to happen ever.”

“I know, Bambi.” Now it was Tony’s turn to look away. “And, I know, you have options. And I don’t want you to do anything you don’t want.” Pulling his arm back from around her waist, Tony settled a hand on each of his knees before taking a deep breath and glancing back up at her with a

now concerned expression.

“I don’t know how to be a dad, my own wasn’t anything to brag about. And let’s face it, even by Howard’s low standards, yours sucks worse. So it isn’t like either of us have any good role models to go by.” Loki’s brows were now furled, and she worried her bottom lip as the silence stretched out for several moments. Taking advantage of them now being almost the same height, Tony leaned his shoulder to hers, as he twined her hand in his, allowing them to rest on her knee.

“But, having said that,” Tony turned hopeful, and yes, somewhat misty eyes towards hers, “If you think you’d like to try, I can’t think of anything I’d like more than having a family with you.”

OoooO

It had been, possibly, the tenderest moment they’d ever shared, including as it had, welling eyes on both sides, soulful looks, and slightly trembling hands clenching tightly together. The emotional high of it carried them through the return of Frigga and Thor, and the finalization of the terms Odin would accept for Loki’s unconditional release.

Yeah. Right.

Anyone who believed that was how the rest of the morning was going to go down didn’t know his god.

Softly curling lips, pressed down into a thin unwavering line the second Frigga had tapped on the door.

The kitchen maid had no sooner deposited her tray, and shut the door behind her when in a voice so snotty, that recent warm fuzzy feeling aside, it was all Tony could do not to smack the sass out of her, Loki demanded, “I would know what her Majesty expects in return for facilitating this agreement?”

Lips twisting as she finished pouring herself some warm, spiced milk, Frigga tutted, “Nothing of course, cannot a mother help her child?” She asked, gazing calmly over the rim of her cup, before taking a sip.

“I suppose,” Loki allowed. And even if it hadn’t been plain to see that mother and child was still a sore subject with her, it would have been crystal clear when she said, “However, I do not want to incur such a debt when no such relationship *technically* exists.”

“Loki.”

“After all, not only am I *not* your child, I was never even *formally adopted*.”

“Loki!”

“Quiet Thor,” Frigga commanded in a tone that brooked no opposition. Setting her cup down, she regarded Loki for a long moment. “Very well, then. Since in your heart, you no longer consider me your mother, the payment I will accept is that for appearance’s sake, you at least pretend that I am. It will make dealing with the court much easier, and at least allow me the illusion of still having you as my child.”

“Mother!”

Frigga waved Thor to silence, without taking her eyes off Loki’s.

“Long ago, someone told me that the problem with illusions was that you sometimes forgot what was reality.”

“Indeed. Still, since you demand a price for my assistance, this is it.”

“And this illusion is supposed to lead to what?” Loki asked harshly. “Forgetfulness of your lies?”

“Not at all,” Frigga responded calmly. “I merely want a second chance. As you have been afforded one, I ask for the same. ”

“And? If it never progresses past this fantasy?”

The two women locked gazes long enough that Thor and Tony had time to exchange a few worried ones of their own.

“Then I will at least have the *illusion* that my child still cares for me.”

Untangling her hand from Tony’s, Loki abruptly stood. “So be it,” she said stiffly, her stance straight backed and rigid. “As soon as I’ve dressed, we will meet you at the palace to finalize our agreement.”

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement. If you'd like to leave something, but struggle with what to say, see the endnotes in chapter 18. :D

****** Trigger Warnings **** discussion of the option of pregnancy termination.**

Chapter 24 - Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Things do not go as planned, but honestly? When do they ever for this group.

Chapter Notes

Stark InterGalactic, and indeed the entire Queens Grace Continuum is fini. In 2013, it was originally planned as a little 70k project to keep me busy until Thor Dark World came out. And then just promptly spiraled out of control. I do thank everyone who cheered me on for these many, many chapters. You guys rock more than Van Halen. While, there might, perhaps, be a Palace or Littlest Trickster one shot in the future, I am not really planning on it.

Beta's [Stella/Ykmust](#) and [EmuSam](#) All after beta changes that created mistakes, which I sadly make a lot of, are mine.

No Trigger Warnings in this chapter

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 24 - Epilogue

Loki's business plans were amazing. He was like fucking Pepper but taller and with broader shoulders. Or at least he was when he was male. Female? The two were of a remarkably similar height, with the exception of cup size and muscle definition.

Laid out before Tony was an auxiliary contract to the official trade documents. Flipping through it, Tony rather thought that instead of being named the God of Mischief, it would not have been any kind of a stretch for Loki to have been named the God of Insanely Profitable Contracts.

“The Jotnar have long been lauded as fine craftsmen. But theirs is a barren land, and without the Casket of Ancient Winters as a power source, they have been limited to mage-crafted flames. As seiðr is often sorely needed elsewhere, it could seldom be spared for crafting, even if they'd had a way to get their goods off planet.” Loki paused, and Tony glanced up at her. Eyes gleaming, she gave him an incredibly sharp smile. “In ancient times, when they had access to transportation and the ability to forge and smelt on a larger basis, Jotun exports were said to have rivaled those of the dwarfs.”

Not that Loki disliked dwarfs. She loathed them. Loathed them, in fact, with every fiber of her being, but you had to give her credit: she never let it show, and was always very polite as she worked to undermined their monopolies. Tony suppressed a chuckle; well, if nothing else, it kept her occupied.

Returning his attention to the matter at hand, Tony leaned forward in his swivel chair, once again studying the documents spread out before him. “And that is where my Arc Reactors come in.”

“Indeed.” Loki passed over the projection sheets which she had not provided to Odin’s trade group. “If Stark InterGalactic provided them with a few of SI’s larger reactors, they could refine their metals and repay you with them in a much more usable form. That would also allow them to make the most of the trade shipments they will initially be allowed per cycle. The excess capacity could be used to create a surplus for their own needs, and eventually trade with the other realms. With us splitting a ten percent share of this new industry with Býleistr.”

“Okay, I can see that, but isn’t Jotunheim still cut off from the other realms?. Isn’t that why everyone was hurting so bad?”

Loki grinned, handing him yet another contract. She drew his attention to the fourth section with an elegantly enameled fingernail.

“They are. Do you know that in addition to metals, Jotunheim produces quite a few highly sought after types of gems, and their ice spider silk rivals anything the elves can create?. Luckily, by the time their metal production is slated to produce a surplus, I can provide discrete transportation of small, highly valued items to trade factors in Vanaheim and Álfheimr. For a nominal fee to my personal purse, of course.”

“Your personal purse, huh?” Tony asked, archly amused at how Loki, no matter what sex or species she currently was, could keep her eye on multiple bottom lines. With her own bank balance of course being first and foremost. But admittedly, Stark’s was number two on Loki’s priority list, so he really had no bitch.

“So suspicious of me, Tony. Which trade agent do you think I would funnel them through?”

Tony had no idea so he settled for just shrugging his shoulders.

“House of Stark Trading. After all, you will have to set up a distribution agency for the products you intend to sell, so their items can be offered with yours. Since there is no overlap between what you will be selling and what they will be selling, you will not compete against each other. Also, this will familiarize the Jotnar with you so that when the day comes that they are allowed unrestricted trade, you will already have a business relationship with them to either buy or sell.” With another sharp smile, she handed Tony a slim sheaf of papers from her seemingly unending stack. “Jane Foster and a few members of council will be minor partners of the trading company. That should keep any regulations or future policy changes from adversely impacting it until it has time to be firmly established.”

“Uh-huh,” Tony said, turning his chair to face her fully. “You know, I gotta ask, as interested as you are in making money, why did you never become a merchant prince before this?”

She smiled impishly down at him as he crowed closer. “Well, my position until Thor started a family allowed me almost anything I wanted. Besides, it was not exactly behavior encouraged for princes in general, and particularly not for second princes, to set themselves up as economic powers that might someday come into conflict with their sibling’s rule.”

“So damn smart. And hot.” Tony questing fingers found the bottom of her shirt, and rucked it up until he could plant a kiss on the bare skin in front of him.

"And sexy." He kissed her again.

“Someday, when you own half of Asgard,” Tony said, switching sides to press a slightly wetter kiss on her smooth skin, “Odin is going to wish he’d never messed with you.”

It had been quite a show when Tony, as head of the House of Stark, had pushed for treason charges against everyone but Fandral and Heimdall. Fandral, because despite a probable past history with his Trickster, was, to Tony way thinking, the least objectionable of Thor's four friends. In addition, of course, to being a Facial Hair Bro. Heimdall got a pass from Tony because he would have been an almost impossible nut to crack, what with being Odin's chief advisor. Not that Tony didn't enjoy a challenge, but fortunately, he and the tall, dark sentry had come to a private arrangement beforehand.

After a long moment peering out the farthest opening on the recently re-opened Bifrost chamber, Tony had turned to Heimdall, and asked, "So. What do you think of it?"

The large golden eyed god took a long, but Tony thought, not unsatisfied look around him. "It is not quite the same."

"Nothing ever is," Tony said with a shrug.

"Agreed. But, I doubt very much you have come all the way out here alone, to speak to me of aesthetics, Anthony Stark."

Tony gave a low laugh, and started slowly pacing back and forth.

"Not at all. With the way you keep track of everything going on, I imagine you watched me filing the charges against your half-sister and Thor's other idiots."

A slow grin spread across Heimdall's face, "And so you have come to threaten for what you perceive was my part in those events?"

Tony tossed him a side glance and a smile, "Not threaten, no. Bargain, I've come to bargain with you."

"You rate yourself so highly mortal, that you think I need to strike a deal with you to keep my position? After all the millennia that I have served Asgard?"

Letting loose a short crack of laughter, Tony fetched up before Heimdall, brow raised in an expression of amused disbelief. "Your position? Look, Heimdall, despite the fact that you and Loki can't stand each other and have messed with each other over the years, I do like you. Face it, you're a fun guy, and more importantly, you are useful to know. Granted you have terrible taste in liquor, but hey, I don't judge." Waving his hand to encompass the elaborate machinery of the Bifrost chamber, Tony said, "Here and now? Odin has your back."

"I have served him from the moment of his ascension to the throne."

"I know. But standing right behind Odin, you have Mrs. Queen and Mister Next Chief Councilor, both of whom are also powerful magic users, and I might point out, pretty good with a shiv. And Mister Next King? He likes you, but he is currently suffering from an attack of fairness."

While Heimdall didn't join Tony in his chuckling, a rueful huff from the dark man seemed to indicate his agreement.

"Yeah. I have no doubt being king will squash that kind of thinking, but at this point in time, for reasons, he is painfully eager not to let his personal feelings interfere with justice," Tony elaborated.

“And how do I know that the House of Stark can make good on a bargain of this sort?”

“Well, if you are still standing here, when everyone else is standing up in front of the court for sentencing, then I will have made good, yeah?”

And so he was. Standing that is, in his observatory, while all the others were in court.

While treason was generally a death sentence, Tony had promised Thor he would only ask for a sentence that was the equivalent of the five hundred year sentence that Loki had received. And because he was a nice guy, he'd only ask for banishment. Such an agreement would send Hogun to his birth realm, Volstagg to the shire that contained his country estate, and Sif to her father's holdings out in the hinterlands. And, again because he was a nice guy, he'd let Thor keep Fandral, as someone he could absolutely trust to watch his back. He even made a helpful suggestion.

“You know, Thor, Lo has been bitching at you to get a real staff together. Why not appoint Flynn Rider as your Chief of Staff? A person who can string as many lovers along as he does, without getting knifed by any of them, has got to be a genius at dealing with personnel.”

Loki, who hadn't said much about Fandral, was less than thrilled about Tony's deal with Heimdall, but he was, at the end of the day, pretty pragmatic when it came to politics. Less thrilled than Loki, however, had been Sif. Heimdall getting a pass was almost expected, what with him being Odin's long time bud and all. And with him being family, she wouldn't dare bring up that he should also be charged... But Fandral getting a pass? That didn't go down near as well.

She had in fact been spitting mad.

“The only reason you're letting Fandral get away is--”

And then Sif just stopped. Her lips pressed tight together while her face grew redder than it had been while she was shouting. And Tony would be wondering at her new found discretion, when she'd never before, to his knowledge, shown any, if... If, it hadn't been for his catching Frigga glaring at the woman, and making a small hand gesture just a moment before Xena's lips seemed to seal shut.

And seeing as how her lips were now zipped, it was the perfect time for Tony to toss in a last minute idea of Loki's. If Sif wanted to cut her sentence short by having a baby, Tony didn't care. And apparently, neither did Odin, who indicated assent with a curt nod to the Head Logmar. Thor looked conflicted. And Sif?

Tony thought she was going to self-combust.

OoooO

While the person opening the door to Loki's limousine was wearing black, it was not the driver the service had sent over that morning. Loki, however, did recognize him and motioned for her guards to relax.

“Nice heels,” Fury said, climbing in to sit opposite her. Setting on the plush leather seat, he nodded towards the guards and asked, “Do you mind if we talk privately for a minute?”

Loki motioned for her two guards to wait outside. While waiting for them to close the door, she turned her attention to Fury's opening conversational gambit.

“They are, aren't they,” Loki said, twisting her foot this way and that, so they could both admire the soft matt black leather, and emerald soles. “They're custom Louboutins.”

“Lovely,” Fury deadpanned. “I’ll have to remember they do specialty work the next time I need new boots.”

Loki’s brows rose almost to her hair line as the mental image of Fury wearing a pair of Louboutin Botalili high boots, with four point seven inch heels... forcibly burned itself upon a cortex that had previously brushed off many an eldritch horror.

“Yeah. Well.” Fury ruefully scrubbed a hand across his smooth head, before giving himself a mental shake and demanding, “Where the hell is Stark?” Loki shrugged.

“Not that it is any of your business, but he’s on Asgard working on something in his lab.”

“Does he even fucking know you are down here?”

“Does he know I’m here? Well, I did tell him, but he doesn’t always listen. But I imagine when I show up with take-out from his favorite Thai restaurant, he will.”

Fury harrumphed.

“Do you want to tell me why SWORD is getting bombarded with calls that you are threatening movie studios?” Loki shrugged again, an action that seemed to increase Fury’s blood pressure in a very negative manner.

“I have no clue; I merely met with them to discuss a business deal to bring contents from your entertainment industry to Asgard’s Mischief Net.”

“What I hear was you told them, you were going to cherry pick their catalog, and pay an insultingly low one time flat price per item. Not only that, but when they tried to argue, you told them you were not going to haggle with them and they really needed to consider what might happen if no agreement was reached.”

“Well, of course we don’t want their entire catalog; all entertainment we import has to be approved by our psychiatrists, one of whom is a sociology expert. With Ms. Lewis looking for any political connotations the good doctors might miss.”

“And your whole, ‘I could pop down here and walk into any video store in the world and no one would ever know about it’ spiel?”

“Fairness dictates that I let them know that their oversight of what happens in Asgard is non-existent, as is their ability to file a lawsuit there. Or, even gather evidence to file one here.” Her expression growing serious, she said, “Nicholas, besides providing fresh ways for the Asgardian mindset to look at a topic in a manner more in line with Midgard's, my other goal is to let Asgard, and eventually the other realms, develop an appreciation of Midgardian culture in general, with an emphasis on your America, since it is Anthony’s country. Understand, the other realms quite frankly don’t give a rush about what happens to Midgard. A side benefit is that this exchange will hopefully create less of a disconnect between Æsir and Midgardian ways of thinking. However, my main thrust is to engender a willingness to assist Midgard in case of future needs. Is that a problem?”

Fury sighed, “No.”

“I thought not. Right now? The average Asgardian cares little for your planet. Anthony, as your planet’s ambassador, would like them to have a vested interest in keeping it intact, if only as a provider of entertainment.”

OoooO

It didn't take long for Tony to track Loki down; barring emergencies Loki always spent his time before dinner in his office going over his schedule for the next day.

"Loki, how is it we have a Dacha in Elfland, when ~~we~~ have never even been in Elfland?"

Glancing up at Tony, a slight frown puckering her forehead, Loki said, "I'm certain I told you about that months ago, Tony." Which Tony had to admit was possible. He had a terrible tendency of thinking about various engineering problems while pretending to pay attention when others talked to him. Not that he would admit it.

"Err... Maybe? But for the sake of clarity, run it by me again, will you?"

"Stark InterRealm has a Consulting Branch. While we advise for all the realms, we specialize in Aesir Court Approvals."

"Really?" Okay, so Tony would be the first to admit he didn't pay attention to causal conversations from time to time. However, he did at least always know what companies he was invested in. Particularly since that time he'd tried to initiate a hostile takeover of a subsidiary he'd forgotten that SI already owned. The board had not been amused. "Since when?"

"Since several high ranking Álfheimr lords were trying to get Odin, and the council, to agree to a mutual trading pact." Loki crinkled up her face at an obviously happy memory, no doubt having to do with besting someone in a business deal. "And they were willing to pay a truly enormous amount of money for information on how best to do it."

Bingo.

"And the Dacha? We bought that with the fee?"

"Don't be silly, Stark. I would have never *bought* a vacation home without your input. The Dacha, as you call it, was included in the agreement as a performance bonus when their deal went through."

OoooO

When Tony, wondering what in the hell he had done this time, was at last ushered into Odin's presence, he was surprised to find the King of Asgard in an affable mood. Needless to say, he was immediately suspicious.

"Ah, Anthony, come in. I need your input before I order the architects to make a hall ready for you. Do you prefer a bridge side or a city side view?"

What the...

"I'm afraid I don't understand. We have a perfectly good house. Better than good actually, I've made lots of improvements. And the lackadaisical attitude of Asgard contractors towards deadlines aside, I am sure I can get a nursery ready that meets Loki standards long before it's needed. As for the palace, you know Loki still has her suite. We often stay there during important feasts." Not that Tony didn't think there were way too many events requiring their attendance in the palace. Odin's parties frankly sucked. And that was not just Tony's opinion, Lo tried like hell to weasel them out of as many as she could.

Odin waved a hand dismissively, "Indeed you don't understand Prinsgemelen Stark. Until such

time as Thor marries, and begets, your son will be an heir to the throne of Asgard. He will need protected, and more importantly, *trained*.”

And wasn't this a conversation that Tony had been hoping like hell wouldn't happen. “Look, your All Fatherness, it isn't like Thor is going anywhere. You could launch the big guy into a supernova, and all that would happen is he'd come back with a gorgeous tan. Besides. Not to be rude or anything... But didn't you already fuck up one kid by telling him he was born to be a king when there was no way in hell that was ever going to happen? I would just as soon that didn't happen to my kid.”

Odin reared back like he'd been struck. “We will of course be more circumspect with what is said to the child this time.”

“Uh huh. So... Even if you never tell the kid he's going to collect all the marbles, everyone will still be treating him like the sun rose and set on his pointy little head. And then what happens when Janie and Thor pop out their own little bundle of--”

“Their joining is by no means assured.”

“Yeah. Not buying that one either. Anyhow. My kid is not going to be raised with everybody acting like the sun and moon revolves around him, and then be ignored when little Thorette is born. Cause kismet-ly? I just know Thor's first one is going to be a girl. And aren't you going to have fun convincing Janie that she should be passed over in favor of a future little brother.”

The conversation went downhill from there.

It took a while, but Tony did manage to find Loki, who was going over some paper work in one of the little conference rooms off the council hall. It didn't take a lot convincing before she allowed Tony to drag her back into Odin's office. An absolutely livid Tony glared at the door guard until he announced them to the King of Asgard.

Tony stomped over, and stopped right in front of Odin, pointed emphatically at him while waving his other hand excitedly for Loki to do *something*!

“Why?” Loki hissed at Odin, her eyes flashing in anger.

“I will not be addressed so disrespectfully.”

“It's Tony Stark; he doesn't have any other form of address!”

“And I am the King of Asgard! I will not put up with his insolence; he will not speak to me so without penalty.”

“Then you had best not speak to him again! Insolence is his main form of communication.”

“Loki, your Midgardian has no manners and no sense of what is due toward the ruler of the realm he resides in.”

“Good, I like him like that.” Green eyes locked angrily with Odin's watery blue one, as she hissed, “Now unseal his lips!”

“I warned him three times to moderate his language, he did not. His lips will be unsealed in three days. Not a moment before.”

“He's not your subject!”

“Your Man of Iron chose to live in my realm. He will follow the laws and customs just like everyone else does, and he will not be disrespectful to the king of this realm without doing so at his peril! If you will not teach him proper behavior, I will have to do it for you.”

“*Arghh!*” she shouted, which was pretty much what Tony would have said... *If his lips weren’t fucking sealed shut!*

Loki grabbed Tony’s arm and without ceremony yanked him out of the room, not letting go of him until they had returned to their house, and made it into her office.

A short time later, she handed him an evilly glowing potion. “Rub this on your lips and throat, and then go hide in your lab for three days. If he finds out I lifted this spell, the next one he uses could be permanent.”

OoooO

The board meeting Tony was attending was right in the middle of item five, the product launch schedule for the next quarter, when the conference room’s lights flickered. Tony frowned. The pattern of rapid flashes was a warning from Jarvis that whatever was getting ready to go down, was of the utmost importance. Tony’s look of honest bewilderment as he tapped the receive button on his earbud was enough to deflect the dagger drawn stare Pepper had immediately directed towards him.

So, okay, Tony admitted to himself as he reached the door leading to the boardroom’s private foyer, he may have, long ago, occasionally used this as a dodge to skip out of meetings early. But in his defense, that was many years ago. Sadly, Pepper had the memory of a bottlenose dolphin, hence her immediate, unfounded, suspicion that Tony had either prearranged, or somehow signaled Jarvis to make up a reason for his immediate, no explanations, escape.

“Talk to me Jay.”

“Sir! Her Highness has gone into labor and is currently being processed through the emergency room of the NewYork-Presbyterian hospital.”

Tony stumbled.

“What the fuck, Jarvis. How is this possible? I thought Lo was going shoe shopping today? What did she do? Pick out some slippers and then decide to pop out the kid? Besides, her due date isn’t for weeks!”

“An obviously incorrect date, as this appears to have been a carefully planned excursion, Sir. After spending several hours in a private showing room, she instructed her driver to follow her. Then, accompanied by Ms. Lewis and the guards, she walked over a dozen blocks to a nearby hospital.”

“Up or down, Jarvis?” Tony asked, approaching the elevator bank.

“Up, Sir. I’ll have a suit waiting for you on the roof. Traffic is a bit heavy right now.”

“Text Pep, tell Loki’s driver to sit tight, and notify... Whichever guards are with Lo right now that I am not happy.”

“That would be Hoen, and Skyjold, Sir.”

Of course it was. Tony huffed, and savagely punched the button for the roof deck. Neither Hoen nor Skyjold were known for asking many questions. And, so long as the room was secure, would

not have even raised an eyebrow at Loki spending hours shut up in a small room, with no doubt comfortable chairs with a steady parade of shoes going in and out. Not to mention that both of them found Darcy's stream of consciousness chit-chat as distracting as her cleavage.

"I must inform you, Sir, that the day after we arrived back on Earth, a maternity suite was reserved at the Greenberg 14 South, New York-Presbyterian's special luxury accommodations wing."

"Wait, what? We've had an entire hospital suite reserved for almost three weeks?"

"Apparently, Sir."

"And you missed this, how?"

"It was reserved using one of Ms. Lewis' personal cards."

"Oh really?"

OoooO

Tony stormed into the waiting room, trailed by several flustered hospital functionaries. It seemed that having Iron Man loop the building because he had poured on too much speed, and then land on your helipad screaming at the sky for immediate assistance, attracted them.

Go figure.

"You!" Tony spat, loathing radiating from him in waves. **"You** are a dead woman."

Lifting her eyes from the phone she was tapping away on, Darcy replied calmly, "No, I'm not."

"Yes. Yes, you are. And if I didn't have to scrub up, so I could go yell up-close and personal at Lokes, I would, right this damn minute, drop your ass in the middle of the East River." Fuming, Tony added viciously, "With a car axle chained to your ankle."

Darcy rolled her eyes, "Yeah. Whatever. Are you going to get in there? Or, are you going to stand out here yelling at me?"

One of the hospital's junior flunkies took this as his clue, and tried to usher Tony towards the scrub and change room, "Mister Stark, if you would just--"

"You shut it," he barked at the man, but headed in the indicated direction. Just before the door closed behind him, Tony poked his head back out and snapped at Darcy, "I'm not done with you."

OoooO

"How is this happening?" Tony demanded slapping open the heavy swinging doors hard enough that they rebounded off the walls, almost hitting him. "Can someone explain to me, how this is fucking happening?!"

Loki raised her head to watch him as he approached. "Well, Anthony, when two people who, for reasons that truthfully defy logic, love each other very much, and enjoy a frequently and varied sex life--"

"Not finding this amusing, Lo."

"No? Why ever not?"

“Why not? Why not?! You are supposed to be...” Tony stopped in mid-shout, catching himself. Did the hospital staff know? Well of course the people knew, but if they didn’t know, or had forgotten, since it was old news... Then should he really be reminding them? Thwarted, Tony glared at the delivery room staff, who were, as opposed to paying attention to their monitors, or doing whatever else they were supposed to be doing, watching them argue.

“Hey?! Could you guys maybe do your damn jobs, or are you just going to stand there and gawk?”

“Perhaps, dearest, it would help if you didn’t shout?” Tony directed his scowl back towards Loki. Whom it affected, as usual, not one bit.

“Honestly, Tony, it’s fine. I made it to the hospital before my water even broke.”

“How, Lokes? How is it fine?” Tony raged glaring down at his annoying spouse, “Please tell me, because, I really want to know. We had a *plan*! Remember that? Remember the *plan*?! ”

“Of course I remember that plan. But this is a better plan.”

Tony almost howled. “**How?!** How is this better? Instead of having Eir and the best healers of...” Tony decided not to worry about who knew what. “Fucking Asgard attending you,” he waved a dismissive hand at the far-too-young-to-be-delivering-his-kid figure in the catcher’s chair, “We have Doogie-god-damn-Howser’s little sister.”

Narrowing her eyes until they were almost slits, Loki hissed, “Stop it right now, Stark. I have been assured that Doctor Wu comes highly recommended, and is quite experienced.”

Tony scoffed.

“Oh really?” He spared a glance for the doctor, who did not look the least bit surprised at having an expectant father making a fuss in her delivery room. “No offense, Doc, but I don’t even know you. And,” he continued turning back to Loki, “Not to belabor the point, ***this was not the plan!***”

“And yet you do belabor it. And please rest assured that this is exactly what I had planned. Besides, think how much it will annoy both of our one eyed--”

Loki broke off with a stifled moan as a strong contraction hit. All the medical personnel in the room glanced up at the big clock on the wall as she trembled, hissing like a broken radiator. After what seemed like an eternity, she sucked in a long breath, and fell limply back against the too small pillow that was the staple of any hospital in the world.

“Seventy seconds,” said the delivery nurse noting it in her chart.

Right behind the nurse were two fidgeting guards, who, wearing scrubs and masks over their Midgardian garb, had until that moment escaped Tony’s notice. He did a little eye narrowing of his own. “You two, out,” he snapped. “Hoen, guard the door, and you, Skyjold, I want you up on the roof yelling until either Heimdall’s ears start to bleed, or Eir gets her ass down here. Move! Now!”

As he watched the two guards almost bolt for freedom, his earbud activated.

“Sir, your armor on the roof is secured. Also, Ms. Potts is en route. Mister Hogan is with her, and he has the more compact suitcase armor which I will activate once he gets it into the waiting area. Also, I have arranged for a helicopter to pick up Doctor Banner in New Haven. It should arrive at his location in approximately ten minutes, so he should arrive within the hour.”

“Seventy seconds, Jay,” Tony snarled.

“It could be close then. Although barring a few speeding tickets, which might be excused in an obstetrician, Doctor Stacy Wu, has an exemplary record, and is quite highly rated.” Having delivered this helpful tidbit, Jarvis continued in a more soothing voice, “And, Sir? Might I suggest calming down a bit?”

“But Jay--”

“It really would be for the best, Sir. There is no need to make an already stressful situation worse.”

“Yeah, but--”

“Indeed. This does not appear to have been a spur of the moment decision, Sir. Before you say much more, you might want to ascertain why her Highness decided to make this change.”

Tony did a half-hearted eye roll. Ignoring the anesthesiologist setting up his equipment at the head of the delivery table, he snatched up a nearby chair, and settled in an area that seemed to be intended for the father-to-be. Loki, trailing IV lines, and monitor cables laboriously rolled over to face him.

Scooting more towards the top of the table, Tony huffed disgruntledly. “Why?”

Taking a deep breath, wincing slightly as she adjusted her position, Loki fastened her gorgeous green eyes on him and gave him the tiniest of trickster smiles. “I think, what you really want to say is thank you.”

“Thank you?”

“Indeed. But, perhaps with a little more enthusiasm.”

Bushing away the fine hairs from her slightly damp forehead, Tony leaned against the thin surgical mattress Loki was laying on. Resting chin upon his curled fist, he searched the face of the being that was, if not exactly his soul mate, or anything resembling such maudlin drek, was in fact his main source of his contentment, belonging as it did to his partner in crime. At least, when Lokes wasn’t tempting him to shoot her for being an annoying, know-it-all, sassy shit, albeit one that Tony had found he couldn’t live without.

“Fine. *Thank you.*” Ignoring the background bustle of the room, he leaned closer, and whispered, “Now. Tell me why.”

Misty eyed, Loki searched his face a moment; she then rested an IV-festooned hand on his shoulder. “I did not want the birth of the son of Tony Stark, Hero of Midgard, to take place anywhere else,” she whispered, her soft voice creating a glow in Tony’s chest. “Our son will belong, first and foremost, to... Earth, not Asgard. No matter what others might have thought was arranged, I have long planned that Midgard should be the son of Stark’s birthplace.” She smiled tenderly at him, eyes still searching his face, even as her thumb drew little circles on his arm, “This is my gift to you, Tony. And, to your realm.”

OoooO

“How did that damn bird get in here?!”

“*Now?!?*”

“*Muthafucking Starks!?*”

Ulf had not made it to his position of the Head Logmar of Asgard by being easily excitable. Small blood red birds, reeking of the void, and popping into existence right over his desk were not common, but neither were they unheard of. Nor was having a somewhat eldritch construct glare at him with glittery ruby eyes as it landed, dropping a cheap looking beige-brown envelope on his desk.

It chirped imperiously.

“Patience,” he admonished absently, picking up the envelope as he was obviously bid.

A short time later, having donned an elaborate robe over his normal work day attire, Ulf strode into the court, serenely walked between two startled petitioners, and planted himself before the throne of Odin, All Father. Ignoring, with a deep internal sigh, the king’s raised brow, he made his obeisance, and then turned to face the crowd. He rapped his staff of office three times before intoning, “Be it known that on this day, designated May 22nd on the Realm of Midgard, whole and hale was born, Asbrand Lokison Stark, third in line to the Throne of Asgard.”

~fini~

.

.

.

.

If you have downloaded this fic to read it on a mobile device, and enjoyed it, it would be most appreciated if you could help the story's placement by commenting, kudo'ing or bookmarking it on the AO3 site.

Chapter End Notes

All comments, kudos, and bookmarks help the stories placement. If you'd like to leave something, but struggle with what to say, see the endnotes in chapter 18. :D

****** Trigger Warnings **** None.**

End Notes

Avengers, Iron Man, & Thor, are the property of Marvel and Disney. No financial gain made from this. For entertainment purposes only.

[Complete List of Works](#)

.
Shifting Circumstances WinterFrost - The Asset could not catch a break. Between asshat Hydra handlers making his days a living hell, there is this guy, or dog, or snake, or who the hell knows what else, wanting to be a pal. He couldn't remember the last time he'd had a friend, or if he'd ever had one. Friends are not supposed to be this damn annoying... Are they? Complete

.
The Winter Wolf WinterFrost - If there is one thing this damn mission did not need, it was a leather wearing bastard with horns getting between him and his target. Not that Loki gives a good god damn what Hydra Assassins want. Complete

.
The Trouble with Tricksters and **The Trouble with Tricksters Two** - Loki is kept in Stark Tower, but he is a NOT silent, dignified, lone figure, mostly avoiding the Avengers he is forced to share living quarters with. Instead he is an in your face brat. Who walks a fine line between annoying the shit out of all of them but doing it in a way that isn't blatant enough for anyone to stomp on him without an avenging Thor coming after them. Complete

.
Queens Grace COMPLETE - After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. Odin then decided to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years, making Asgard unsafe for Loki's reduced station. Frigga decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest.

.
Anthony of Asgard - COMPLETE - After several years of being housed in Stark Tower as a state prisoner of Asgard, Loki is recalled to Realm Eternal. Devastated Tony is minus a lab partner, wingman and a snark buddy. Pepper has married, SHIELD is doing crazy shit. Despite occasionally seeing Bruce, Tony feels lonely despite being in a city full of people. However he's an engineer & a genius, he can fix this. If he can convince Queen Frigga and Odin All Father to go along with his plan.

.
Stark InterGalactic COMPLETE - After years of Loki being a memory washed prisoner in Stark Tower, Tony misses him when he is gone. So, Tony formed a civil union with the Trickster. Their relationship has moved past friendship, but misunderstandings & a long distance relationship caused serious problems.

.
How Desperate Are You? COMPLETE - Loki has had a bad year, returning to Asgard and challenging Odin isn't making it any better, and... Sometimes stubborn happens. It may not seem to be in your best interest, but how desperate are you for a resolution? Loki is returned to Asgard and nothing good happens, but Loki isn't the only one with issues, Odin has plenty of his own, especially in the realm of A+ Parenting. Loki wants to escape Asgard, Odin and his past.

.
Desperate for Change COMPLETE - Returning to Midgard after an absence of almost two years, Loki finds that as desperate for change as he has been, some changes will take time to get used to, especially concerning his relationship with Tony and Pepper.

.
Earth is good thanks, can I talk to Loki COMPLETE - Steve Rogers did not spend seventy years in ice for stuff like this to be happening. Since desperate times call for desperate measures. He calls upon the one person he can think of who will help him. It's risky, but Steve is determined.

.

[Palaces of Sand and Gold](#) and **The Littlest Trickster** COMPLETE Domestic One Shots
in the Queens Grace Verse that can be read alone.

Works inspired by this ~~one~~ [Stark InterGalactic Art](#) by [RenneMichaelsArt \(RenneMichaels\)](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!